# Towards A Spatial Monitoring Framework For The Island Of Ireland: A Scoping Study

2011

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Cormac Walsh, Neale Blair,
Jim Hetherington, Justin Gleeson

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This research on the need for a monitoring framework for national spatial plans has been undertaken as part of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development's (ICLRD) EU-Funded initiative, CroSPlaN. Funded under INTERREG IVA, and administered by the Special EU Programmes Body, this three-year programme promotes the development of a cross-border planning network by enhancing and promoting the opportunities that exist for collaboration and addressing identified areas of need. This study brings together a multi-disciplinary research team drawn from academic and research organisations on the island of Ireland.

This is an additional research study under CroSPlaN that the Steering Committee feels will contribute to linking the evidence-based planning and monitoring of the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) in Northern Ireland with the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) in the Republic of Ireland – as well as support the roll-out of the joint government consultation document, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Framework for Collaboration.*

**Acknowledgements**

The ICLRD would like to thank the CroSPlaN Steering Committee for their assistance, advice and guidance throughout the course of this research. We also convey our sincerest thanks to the numerous interviewees and focus group attendees who were consulted during the course of this study; the views and opinions expressed contributed significantly to this work.

The research team takes this opportunity to thank the ICLRD partners for their support during this study. We would also like to convey our sincerest thanks to the speakers who travelled to give presentations at the ESPON seminar: *Indicator Development and Monitoring for the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines* held in Dublin on 28th September 2011. Their international expertise and experience provided invaluable insights for this study (see Appendix IV for further information).

## About the Authors

**Dr. Cormac Walsh** was until November 2011 employed as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and an affiliate of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD). He holds a PhD in Planning and Public Policy from University College Dublin. His research interests include European spatial planning, territorial cooperation and governance, urban spatial change and environmental governance. He now works as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at HafenCity University Hamburg in northern Germany.

**Dr. Neale Blair** is a Senior Lecturer with the School of the Built Environment, University of Ulster and Assistant Director of the ICLRD. He is a chartered town planner, and is active in research projects commissioned by local government and research councils to examine issues relating to, *inter alia*, public participation and brownfield development in Europe.

**Jim Hetherington** is a Senior Research Associate with the ICLRD and the School of the Built Environment, University of Ulster. He has over 35 years experience working as a civil servant across a number of Departments in Northern Ireland; working on strategic planning and development management at a local and regional level, and cross-border collaborative working arrangements with officials in the Republic of Ireland.

**Justin Gleeson** is currently the Project Manager of the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) based in the National University of Ireland Maynooth. He is also the Technical Manager of spatial projects at the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) – also based in the National University of Ireland Maynooth – and involved in a number of ICLRD and ESPON projects. His main research areas are in demographics, social inclusion, mapping and spatial analysis, and improving public data usage and dissemination.

# Chapter I: Introduction – Policy Background and Rationale for Spatial Monitoring and Indicators

Launched in 2001, the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) for Northern Ireland set out an ambitious long-term strategic policy framework, with the aim of providing an explicit spatial dimension to the investment plans and sectoral policies of the Northern Ireland Executive. The *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for the Republic of Ireland, published in 2002, similarly articulated a strong vision and long-term strategy for balanced regional development. The strategies represented pioneering examples of a new generation of spatial strategies in Europe, providing good practice examples for other countries and regions.

Ten years later, both governments have reaffirmed their commitment to these strategies through the publication of the *National Spatial Strategy: Update and Outlook* report in October 2010 and the recently closed consultation on the RDS. The publication of a joint consultation draft on a non-statutory collaborative framework in February 2011, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Framework for Collaboration,* explicitly linking the NSS and RDS, represents a high-level commitment to a collaborative approach to the implementation of the two spatial strategies, with very significant implications, particularly for the Irish border corridor and its sub-regions.

In the light of increased uncertainty and volatility in relation to spatial development and socio-economic trends in recent years, and a recognised need for a fundamental reappraisal of the role of planning systems North and South, the capacity to monitor and evaluate the progress of the NSS and RDS in achieving their objectives becomes increasingly critical.

The 2011 collaborative framework document notes that many of the spatial development challenges faced North and South are similar and, indeed, often all-island or cross-border in nature. The importance of developing common spatial data infrastructures based on detailed and consistent data at the local level is also recognised; with the acknowledgement that:

> *'We need to work together to provide a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to integrating datasets in areas such as*

*population, employment, transportation, housing and the environment'* (2011: 20).

One organisation working at an all-island level to integrate datasets and make data available that is both comparable and compatible for the island of Ireland is the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO – see www.airo.ie for further information). AIRO provides the central platform for collating and disseminating spatial data on an explicitly all-island basis, and is a key resource for the development of indicators and territorial monitoring frameworks.

The primary objective of AIRO is to provide easy access to information and data that is necessary to support evidence-based policy development in both the Irish border region and the other regions of the island of Ireland. Specifically, AIRO aims to:

- Improve access to research and intelligence;
- Facilitate the coordination of research programmes;
- Promote good practice in research;
- Increase the coverage and compatibility of regional datasets; and
- Improve the quality and relevance of research undertaken in the Irish border region.

Previous studies have identified significant data interoperability issues in working with datasets on an all-island or cross-border basis (Gleeson *et al,* 2008; Inter*Trade*Ireland*,* 2006). Substantial progress has been made, however, through the work of a number of agencies, as well as European, national and regional initiatives. As a result, data problems no longer prohibit the production of meaningful and policy-relevant spatial indicators or monitoring reports on an all-island basis.

This study focuses on the application of data for the purpose of informing policy decisions, in particular with respect to the policy objectives and strategic ambitions of the NSS and RDS. The development, application and interpretation of indicators is critical to this process. International studies and experience indicate the importance of evidence-informed approaches to decision-making but also the dangers of relying on statistical or quantitative information without taking due account of the underlying processes the data represents. Drawing lessons from policy

initiatives in the Boston Metropolitan area for the Irish context, Kahn and St. Clair (2011) identified the need to address the challenge of being 'data rich but insight poor'.

## 1.1 The Role of Indicators in Territorial Monitoring and Evidence-Informed Spatial Planning

The development and application of indicators is a key component of any approach to evidence-informed spatial planning and territorial monitoring. Indicators occupy a space between scientific analysis and policy-making and can be employed, therefore, to assess progress towards specific overarching societal objectives. They are not independent of the policy context but serve to provide an assessment and interpretation of territorial development dynamics, patterns and trends in light of specific policy objectives; i.e. they can inform policy responses, be used to gauge the 'performance' of spatial planning strategies and measure spatial planning outcomes. Spatial indicators may, as such, be understood as tools for communication; providing as they do concise, accessible and accurate policy-relevant information to territorial development stakeholders. Indicators also provide a means of assessing the performance of integrated territorial development strategies. In some cases one indicator may serve to highlight progress in relation to a particular policy objective, or to provide an indication of the direction and magnitude of territorial trends with respect to a particular area of interest. They have the potential to demonstrate the added value of place-based approaches; and in this way, they are a core element of territorial monitoring systems and reports.

It is also useful to distinguish between *process* and *outcome* indicators:

- *Process indicators* seek to measure the effects of a policy, strategy or concept within the governance system. This type of indicator relates to an understanding of territorial cohesion as a process for coordinating the spatial impacts of sectoral policies (also known as Territorial Policy Integration). Similarly 'sustainable development' may be understood as a framework for integrating the environmental dimension into other sectoral policies (i.e. Environmental Policy Integration).
- *Outcome indicators,* in contrast, seek to measure spatial development outcomes. In this case, it may be difficult to attribute particular outcomes to specific policy interventions.

Such indicators do, however, provide a necessary evidence base for future policy intervention.

### 1.2 The Objectives of this Research Study

Spatial strategies such as the NSS and RDS clearly have wide-ranging ambitious objectives. These may be both tangible and quantifiable, such as specific targets relating to the future distribution of population, employment or housing. They may, however, be less concrete and more difficult to measure, such as the influence of the NSS and RDS on sectoral policies and investment programmes or indeed, cross-border and all-island territorial cooperation. Prof. Andreas Faludi, perhaps the leading academic expert on European spatial planning, argues that strategic spatial plans such as the NSS and RDS are fundamentally different from traditional comprehensive or land-use plans. He suggests that the primary objective of such strategic plans is to inform decision-making rather than to effect material outcomes. From this perspective, spatial strategies should be evaluated in terms of their capacity to shape the 'minds of actors in spatial development' (Faludi, 2006: 120).

This research study, being undertaken by the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) as part of its INTERREG-funded CroSPlan Programme (see Appendix I) aims to review international approaches to spatial strategy monitoring and indicator development, highlighting those lessons applicable to the NSS and RDS. This includes reviewing existing indicator sets with respect to data availability, spatial resolution and all-island comparability and, where possible, including indicators developed at the regional level for the Irish border region. This study will advise on the potential linkages between European, all-island, national and regional indicator sets and concludes by making recommendations for the development of monitoring frameworks for the NSS and RDS. Specifically, these will focus on the capacity of the NSS and RDS to inform decision-making, and effectively guide the spatial distribution of development

# Chapter II: Experience to Date in Monitoring and Indicator Development – Managing for Success

This section considers the implications of monitoring and managing new ways of strategic planning on the island of Ireland, the challenges to institutions involved in that process, the central role of government in monitoring and managing for success and the extent to which that has been achieved to date.

It is now well understood, North and South of the island, that plan- or strategy-making should not stop at the point where the plan or strategy is agreed and adopted. The task of implementing any plan or strategy, or delivering its benefits or objectives, is often claimed to be integral to its success. But how well is this need seen to be translated into action?

Short-term plans which are a compact set of objectives may require little adaptation to changing externalities, but implementing medium- or longer-term strategies presents much greater challenges as many of the assumptions upon which they were based, and the actors who will deliver them, will change with time.

## 2.1 European Influence on Spatial Planning

The arrival of the 21st century heralded a "new" way of planning across Europe and the island of Ireland which was built around the idea that all policies should have a perspective related to place (or "territory"), and not just those which have traditionally been described as land-use policies. This new way of planning – known as spatial planning – recognised that different places have different needs according to their location, assets, and people, and that a policy which works in one location might not work in another, or might not work so effectively even though both locations strive for similar outcomes or objectives.

This thinking emerged from the need to seek alignment with European Union (EU) policy objectives, particularly those dealing with spatial planning. Yet the diversity of the European Commission presents a huge challenge to centralised planning through singular solutions. In

the late 1990s, the proposed solution was contained in the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) which was based around three considerations; namely:-

- The progressive economic integration and related increased co-operation between the Member States;
- The growing importance of local and regional communities and their role in spatial development; and
- The anticipated enlargement of the EU and the development of closer relations with its neighbours.

The ESDP set out that

> *"Cities and regions are becoming more dependent, both on global trends and decisions at the Community level. European integration could benefit spatial development by encouraging the participation of cities and regions..... The ESDP provides the possibility of widening the horizon beyond purely sectoral policy measures, to focus on the overall situation of the European territory and also take into account the development opportunities which arise for individual regions"* (1999: 7).

and....

> *"New forms of co-operation proposed in the ESDP should, in future, contribute towards a co-operative setting up of sectoral policies – which up to now have been implemented independently – when they affect the same territory. .....This is how the subsidiarity principle, rooted in the Treaty on EU, is realised"* (1999: 7-8).

The ESDP introduced many new ideas and support mechanisms to realise its objectives, many of which are still familiar to us today. These include the concept of "balanced regional development" and pilot action funding schemes such as INTERREG and LEADER. However, it contained one enduring insight. It recognised that the process would be progressive, that

success would depend upon building layer upon layer through the persistent application of EU long-term objectives into a wide range of sectoral policies within each Member State;

> *"The Member States should co-operate closely with each other and with the European Commission in applying the ESDP. The translation of the objectives and options set out in Chapter 3 into concrete political action will take place gradually.....This includes, in particular, the exchange of experience and the monitoring and evaluation of spatial developments"* (1999: 12).

The ESDP, as such, carries a clear health warning that success will depend upon a continuing process of research to understand and record the dynamics of spatial planning elements in each member State. This in turn will be linked to an iterative process of engagement, using monitoring and evaluation tools, to provide insight into how the process of change management can be achieved in a managed and efficient way.

## 2.2 New Spatial Strategies across the island of Ireland

The period 1997 to 2002 saw the introduction of new forms of strategic planning across the island of Ireland which drew heavily upon ESDP thinking. This happened first in Northern Ireland to support changing political arrangements including the establishment of the Northern Ireland Executive under the 1998 Good Friday / Belfast Agreement, and was followed closely in the Republic of Ireland by a need to provide spatial expression to a refreshed National Development Plan (NDP).

### ***2.2.1 Northern Ireland***

Land-use planning in Northern Ireland has been the responsibility of central government departments for the last four decades (i.e. since 1973), with a key consequence of this lack of regular democratic oversight having been the introduction of administrative checks and balances that have led to latent inertia and heavy regulation.

The opportunity for change arose in 1998 when the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement[1] promoted a new way of looking at the development needs of a region recovering from many years of civil strife. This Agreement was an essential element of a political bargain designed to usher in more inclusive governmental arrangements. Ongoing work on the production of a Belfast City-Region land-use plan was abandoned in favour of a new "spatial development" strategy for the whole of Northern Ireland. The resulting *Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025* (RDS) was adopted in 2001 with cross party support in the Assembly. This strategy, ambitiously entitled *Shaping Our Future*, would cover the period from 2001 to 2025; with reviews at 5 year intervals. It would promote balanced regional development whose objectives would be sustainable, and take account of the social and economic needs of citizens in addition to dealing with environmental issues.

The strategy was to be a coordinating device based on a shared vision. It was to provide a sense of direction for decision-makers rather than be a set of discrete programme actions, and afford a spatial dimension for the newly emerging Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government.

Before its formal adoption, the RDS was reviewed at a Public Examination. The resulting *Public Examination Panel Report* (published in 2000) endorsed the "monitor and manage approach" of the Strategy but, with great foresight, warned that its success would depend upon clear leadership and effective and co-ordinated action. This is a reference to the model of central government in Northern Ireland where many powers and responsibilities reside in Ministers rather than in a Cabinet. In the case of the RDS and its roll-out, while the lead would rest primarily with the Minister for the Department for Regional Development, many actions could only be undertaken by other Ministers. An ensuing – and persistent – question emerging from this model of governance is who then has the ability or authority to lead those several Ministers who may have competing interests?

Regional Management arrangements as outlined in Chapter 13 of the RDS identified the need to introduce "*sensible, efficient and effective sub-regional arrangements which have the active support of key stakeholders*" (Department for Regional Development, 2001: 202).

[1] The Agreement, Government of United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland, 10 April 1998.

Implementation was to be based on local agreement and subject to change in the light of decisions on the wider Review of Public Administration (RPA); the first terms of reference for which were published in 2002. Implicit in this was an agreed way to measure the efforts and / or resources required to tackle those issues.

A "focussed assessment"[2] of the RDS was carried out after 5 years, and a Major Review[3] conducted after 10 years; yet there is little evidence of a coherent process of monitoring and evaluation. A monitoring framework had been discussed with the Department for Regional Development (DRD) Assembly Committee, and annual reports were produced until the 5 year Focussed Assessment was published in 2008. While these annual reports provided a statistical picture of progress against individual themes in the RDS, they did not provide information about how Departments were collaborating to shape change. This shortcoming was continually reported by stakeholders. The inevitable conclusion of the 5-year Review was that monitoring arrangements should be reassessed as part of the Major Review to be carried out at the 10-year point, and that there would be no more annual reports in the first format.

At the time of writing, the outcome of the Major Review has not been published. But it is clear in the draft report provided for public consultation that effective coordination of RDS implementation arrangements must continue to be based on evidence, and achieved through collaboration between the key government departments, sub-regional agencies and stakeholders.

Despite a very productive engagement with an External Stakeholder Group during the Review process, the DRD continues to rely on a senior civil servant Implementation Group within the Administration for advice on ongoing implementation. The draft Review Report provides no insight into how this Implementation Group would interface with external stakeholders - whether in local government or civil society. Given the Northern Ireland Executive's intention to devolve community and land-use planning powers to local government by 2015 under RPA, it would be desirable to develop broader linkages and feedback mechansims to guide and measure progress towards the implementation of the RDS.

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[2] The first Five Year Review of the *Regional Development Strategy*, undertaken by the Department for Regional Development (DRD), was published in June 2008.

[3] Public Consultation – 10 year Review of Regional Development Strategy (Shaping Our Future) 2025, DRD, January 2011.

At the same time, it should be noted that the RDS has produced some significant success stories. Housing growth indicators published by DRD in 2006 have, for example, been accepted as soundly-based by the Planning Appeals Commission when examining draft development plans. And there is a growing acceptance within the wider community that these indicators are a more realistic assessment of housing need – rather than the over inflated market-led estimates produced by developers challenging emerging development plans.

### *2.2.2 Republic of Ireland*

The launch of the *National Development Plan* in 1999 was set in a period of remarkable growth and confidence, where the Republic of Ireland enjoyed the fourth highest level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head in the European Union. The Government recognised that to distribute this success to all of its territory, and deal with problems of overheating in the Greater Dublin Area, it must deal with what it termed "spatial imbalance". This resulted in the publication of the *National Spatial Strategy for Ireland* (NSS) covering the period from 2002-2020 (Department of An Taoiseach, 2001). The strap line of "People, Places and Potential" provides immediate insight into the intended purpose of the document; with the document describing itself as "*a twenty year planning framework designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development and population growth between regions. Its focus is on people, on places and building communities"* (2002:10).

Unlike Northern Ireland, planning powers are devolved to local government in the Republic of Ireland and, in this context, the NSS clearly sets out key concepts to be followed by central and local government when undertaking plan- and policy-making. At the time of its publication, the Strategy did not have a statutory base – but government warned that it would expect that policies and programmes (for development) should be consistent with the NSS framework and objectives, and that they would introduce new legislation, if required, to secure this necessary consistency of approach; the Strategy having recognised that "*the activities of many organisations in the public and private sector whose polices, programmes and decisions significantly influence spatial development must be integrated in order to achieve the NSS objective of more balanced regional development*" (2002: 118). For the purpose of implementing the NSS, these organisations are described as Government Departments, Agencies, Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities – as well as private sector infrastructure

providers. Since then, new legislation in the form of the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* requires revised development plans to have core strategies that are consistent with the policies and objectives of the spatial planning hierarchy; namely the NSS and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs).

The NSS is, therefore, very clear that the mechanism for realising the benefits of the Strategy will depend upon effective integration of activity that is based upon clear targets which are informed by reliable systems of monitoring. And while the NSS was intended to be an important factor in the Government's prioritisation of capital investment and the associated allocations, by Ministers, in their respective sectoral spending plans, this did not always go to plan. A major element of the NSS was the designation of Gateway Cities and Towns, significant urban nodes in the transport infrastructure capable of responding sustainably to growth stimulus. The Gateways were, in effect, a decentralisation (or polycentric) model with the central objective of avoiding overheating difficulties in the Greater Dublin Area. However, while this model was underpinned by research and further policy statements (DoEHLG, 2009) its virtues did not attract universal approval. The most significant demonstration of this was the decision by a number of Government Ministers to select non-Gateway towns as office locations for the Government's Programme of Decentralised Administration.

Because most planning powers reside with local authorities, the accomplishments of the NSS rely upon the success of County/City Development Plans and associated policies. The eight Regional Authorities assist in the roll-out of the spatial planning hierarchy by interpreting the NSS through Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) which, since the 2010 Act, now have 'teeth' in terms of enforcing vertical and horizontal policy integration. The NSS is further being supported by a spatial data capture programme called DevPlan which is designed to provide central and local government with good quality GIS-based information about development plans and development management decisions. Being led by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, this initiative has the capability to ultimately change the basis for dialogue and negotiation between central and local government. However, for these relatively new powers and systems to 'begin to bite' – this includes the de-zoning of development land in settlements to match planned demand – long-term consistency in both policy and application at both central and local levels of government will be required.

## 2.3 Linking Spatial Planning between North and South

Both the NSS and the RDS have a common root in the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) and were prepared in response to a need for a new policy tool expressing new political thinking. They each record a responsibility to co-operate in strategic planning across boundaries for a more sustainable future on the island which they share.

But as well documented, the problems of co-operating at political level are many and complex. The history of the island of Ireland places many obstacles in the way of significant cross-border institutional and / or functional integration. Yet increasingly changes are evident in the way that neighbouring cross-border councils deal with day-to-day issues such as promoting local economic development or delivering services.

Under the 1998 Good Friday / Belfast Agreement, spatial planning was not included as a formal agenda item within the six areas for cooperation that are managed by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)[4]. Yet, given the cross-sectoral nature of spatial planning and its implications for implementation of the six areas for cooperation, the NSMC has from time-to-time brought forward spatial planning related issues for consideration at sectoral and plenary meetings between both administrations. At Ministerial level, there has been continuing dialogue on mutual strategic spatial planning interests stimulated in part through the efforts of cross-border bodies such as Inter*Trade*Ireland (ITI) and research organisations such as the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) that together drafted and published the 2006 report on *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Development of a Framework for Collaborative Action*. A meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in Dublin in May 2006 endorsed the report's recommendation for the development of a framework for collaborative action between the two spatial planning strategies on the island; a joint initiative that it would take a further five years to deliver (see below).

Since 2009, collaborative spatial planning has been an area of work for the British-Irish Council (BIC), a body also established as a result of the 1998 peace agreement. A core objective of this body is to further promote positive, practical relationships among the people of the islands on a

[4] The six areas include: Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Tourism, and Transport.

North-South and East-West basis; and in the context of collaborative spatial planning its emphasis is to address issues jointly that cross over boundaries.

There is a continuing demand at stakeholder level for greater collaboration in North / South policy development and implementation. This is not only evident at a political level through the efforts of the British-Irish Council but also through the research work of bodies such as the ICLRD, Inter*Trade*Ireland and the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS). It has also been vocalised at workshops and conferences organised by the ICLRD, CCBS, IBEC-CBI and the three cross-border region networks. This demand tends to arise most often as an expression of frustration at what has been termed "back to back" planning, and a perception of always being geographically on the periphery. And this is despite there being a growing functional interdependence across both jurisdictions through transportation and energy supply connectivity, and increasing incidences of labour and capital mobility.

Building on the work of both Governments, and the research agenda which has supported cross-border and all-island spatial planning policy and practice over the past five years, it seemed that a sea change was about to occur in February 2011 with the joint publication for public consultation, by the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland, of a draft joint framework for collaboration. Entitled *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Framework for Collaboration*, this non-statutory document represents an acceptance by the Spatial Planning Departments of both governments on the island of Ireland of the recommendations contained in the aforementioned InterTradeIreland / ICLRD joint report (2006). Furthermore, it very clearly demonstrates the time needed politically to assimilate an agreed basis for progress. The resulting 2011 non-statutory Framework remains as a draft document until it can be cleared at an inter-governmental level. When adopted, it will also rely on the monitoring and evaluation of human dynamics at local, regional and national scale to inform its process.

## 2.4 Lessons Learned from Experiences to Date

It is clear that recent spatial plans at national and regional level across the island of Ireland have been prepared from an evidence-base, and that the process of implementation is being supported by deliberate monitoring and review.

But this process has not run smoothly and there are large gaps in the level of understanding of the value of this process across central and local government. Indeed, it could be argued that there are vested interests who see no benefit in a change of style to embrace subsidiarity[5] and empower sub-regional spatial planning.

The key lessons emerging from over a decade of European spatial planning policy and the exchange of experiences as they relate to the monitoring and evaluation of spatial development includes:-

1) The act of spatial information collection and analysis needs to be better co-ordinated North and South, and between regional and local authorities. This should not present difficulties in the context of meeting the EU INSPIRE Directive but will require a deliberate act of leadership.
2) Monitoring needs to use indicators and tools that are intuitive and easy to use. Fewer and more meaningful indicators are needed, starting with those that are relevant to how people live their daily lives.
3) Planners must be equipped in their professional training to better explain the relevance of monitoring to officials, elected members and community representatives and be able to provide assurance on the quality of evidence presented to support recommendations. In turn, officials and elected representatives must be trained in data analysis and interpretation (see point 6 below) so that the advice and recommendations of the planning community is not ignored.
4) There needs to be greater recognition that the political dimension is an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation process – equal to the role of policy debate

[5] Subsidiarity is an organising principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority.

and adoption. This understanding will not come about without leadership and more dialogue between politicians and planners.

5) Monitoring must involve the whole spectrum of actors, from the bottom-up and top-down. There must be no gaps as these will only create opportunity for dissent and interrupted progress.
6) A great deal of high quality data is available from central and local government sources. Great strides are being made in making data and spatial analysis tools available on-line and this must be matched in training opportunities for officials and elected members to ensure that they are equipped to become better informed in their separate roles and responsibilities.
7) There is a role for a policy community to provide an overview of the success, or otherwise, of monitoring in spatial plan implementation, and to facilitate greater understanding of the actions needed to bring about more effective use of evidence in strategy and policy development at all levels of government.

# Chapter III: International Experience in Indicator Development for Spatial Planning – Lessons from Europe

Since the early 1990s and perhaps before this, the importance of a robust evidence base of comparable information has been recognised as a necessary requirement for the development, application and monitoring of European spatial policy. In direct response to this policy need, the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON Programme) was established in 2002. The research results of the various ESPON Programmes have contributed significantly to the preparation of the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union* in 2007 and its subsequent revision in May 2011. Specifically, the background documents in both instances, *The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union* were informed by ESPON results. The outputs of the current ESPON Programme are also expected to play a significant role in the implementation of the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020* and the development of Cohesion Policy Operational Programmes post-2013 (Polish Presidency, 2011).

The *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020* (from hereonin written as TA 2020) and the broader territorial cohesion policy agenda, together with the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, highlight the critical challenges facing the European territory in the next years and decades. These challenges include increased exposure to globalisation, challenges associated with EU integration and interdependence of regions, demographic and social change, environmental risks, energy security and loss of natural and cultural challenges. They also include challenges associated with increased disparities, social polarisation and exclusion. These challenges signify an era of increased uncertainty and complexity. Yet, it is recognised that there are also significant opportunities for strategic actors in territorial development to respond to demands for place-based, cross-sectoral and multilevel approaches to policy-making.

### 3.1 ESPON Feasibility Study on Monitoring Territorial Development

A number of projects conducted to date under the ESPON Programmes[6] have focussed directly on the development of indicators and territorial monitoring frameworks for spatial planning. The results of these projects are largely applicable at national and sub-national scales, as well as at the European level. Of particular interest to this study was a feasibility study on monitoring territorial development that was produced as one of the final outputs of the first ESPON Programme[7]. The project team, led by the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) in Germany, adopted a comprehensive understanding of 'spatial monitoring'; acknowledging the critical position of such monitoring frameworks at the interface between scientific research, policy and politics:

> *"Spatial monitoring must satisfy both the demands for an analytical base for sound spatial analysis and also for the varying political demands enabling the evaluation of policy strategies and the assessment of the achievement of policy aims"* (ESPON, 2009a: 8).

The approach of this project, in fact drew strongly on the experience of the BBR in spatial monitoring at the federal level in Germany. The BBR provides continuous spatial monitoring, making up-to-date spatial data and analysis publically available in a broadly similar manner to AIRO. A CD-ROM containing maps and indicators of spatial and urban development in Germany and Europe (known as INKAR) is released annually; the 2011 edition, for example, included over 500 indicators[8]. The BBR, however, also produces periodical spatial monitoring reports (*Raumordnungsberichte)* on a less regular basis, the most recent of which was published in 2005 (BBR, 2005). This report was divided into two sections; the first section is concerned with spatial development (i.e. monitoring and interpreting spatial patterns and trends) while the second section details spatial planning policies and instruments at the level of the federal government, federal state governments and the European Union.

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[6] European Spatial Planning Observation Network (2002-2006), European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (2007-2013).

[7] ESPON project 4.1.3: Monitoring Territorial Development (2006-2009) http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_ESPON2006Projects/Menu_ScientificBriefingNetworking/

[8] Information on INKAR: http://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/Veroeffentlichungen/INKAR/inkar__node.html (In German only).

The ESPON project identified six thematic fields based on an analysis of strategic EU policies, with specific attention paid to the economic competitiveness debate and the Lisbon Agenda, sustainable development and the Gothenburg agenda and, finally, the Territorial Agenda:

1. *Cohesive spatial structure*
   - Balanced distribution of population, wealth, cities, etc.
   - Sustainable settlement structures

2. *Competitiveness (Lisbon Agenda)*
   - Assets for global competitiveness
   - Innovative knowledge society
   - Diversified regional economies

3. *Infrastructure and accessibility*
   - Sustainable transport and energy

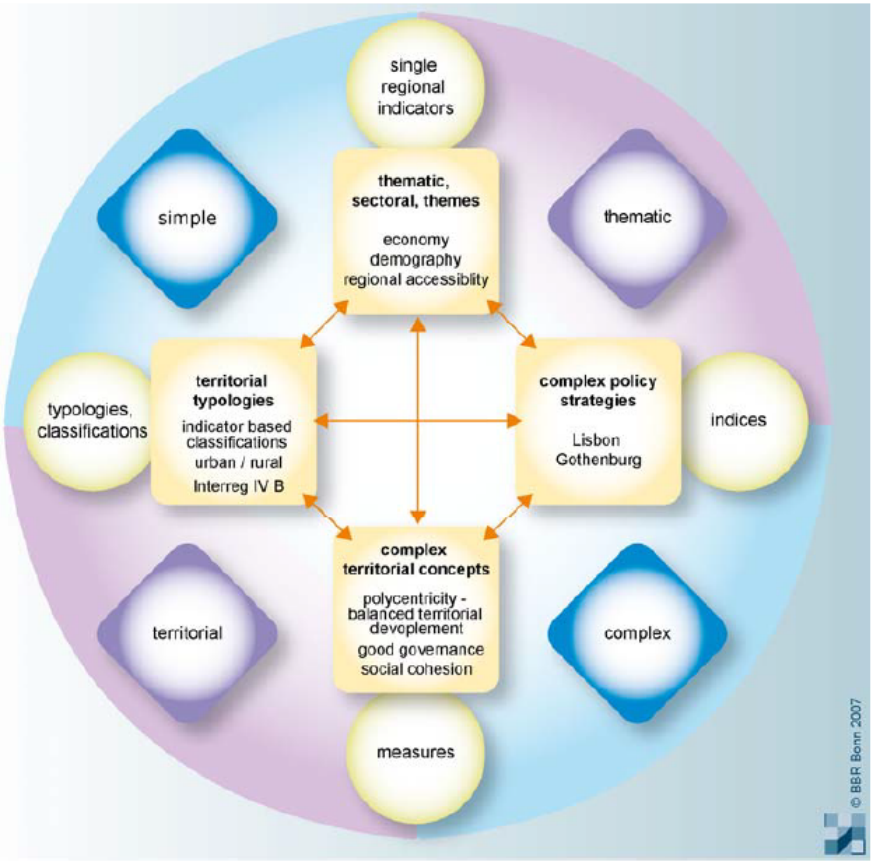
4. *Environment (Gothenburg Agenda)*
   - Healthy environment and hazard prevention

5. *Socio-cultural aspects*
   - Socially inclusive society and space
   - Diversified cultural heritage and identities

6. *Governance*
   - Territorially oriented governance.

In order to be able to capture the complexity of territorial development processes and policy requirements, the project makes a further useful analytical distinction between simple and complex, and thematic and territorial, components of territorial monitoring (see Figure 3.1).

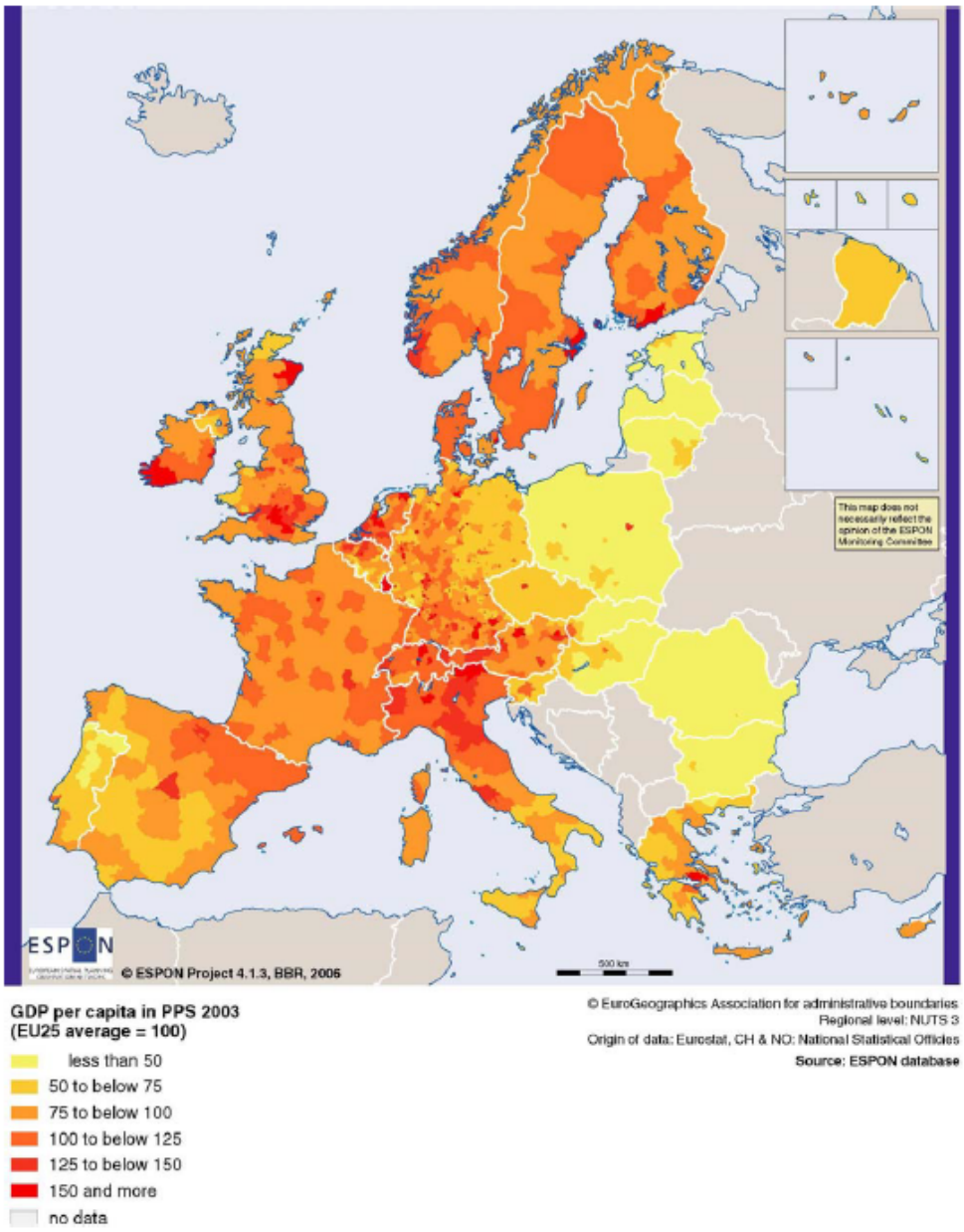
**Figure 3.1: Components of Territorial Monitoring**




(Source: ESPON, 2009a: 5).

Examples of **simple thematic indicators** include GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita, as a measure of economic performance, or percentage population growth as a measure of demographic development (see Figure 3.2). In each case, the output is a single regional indicator.

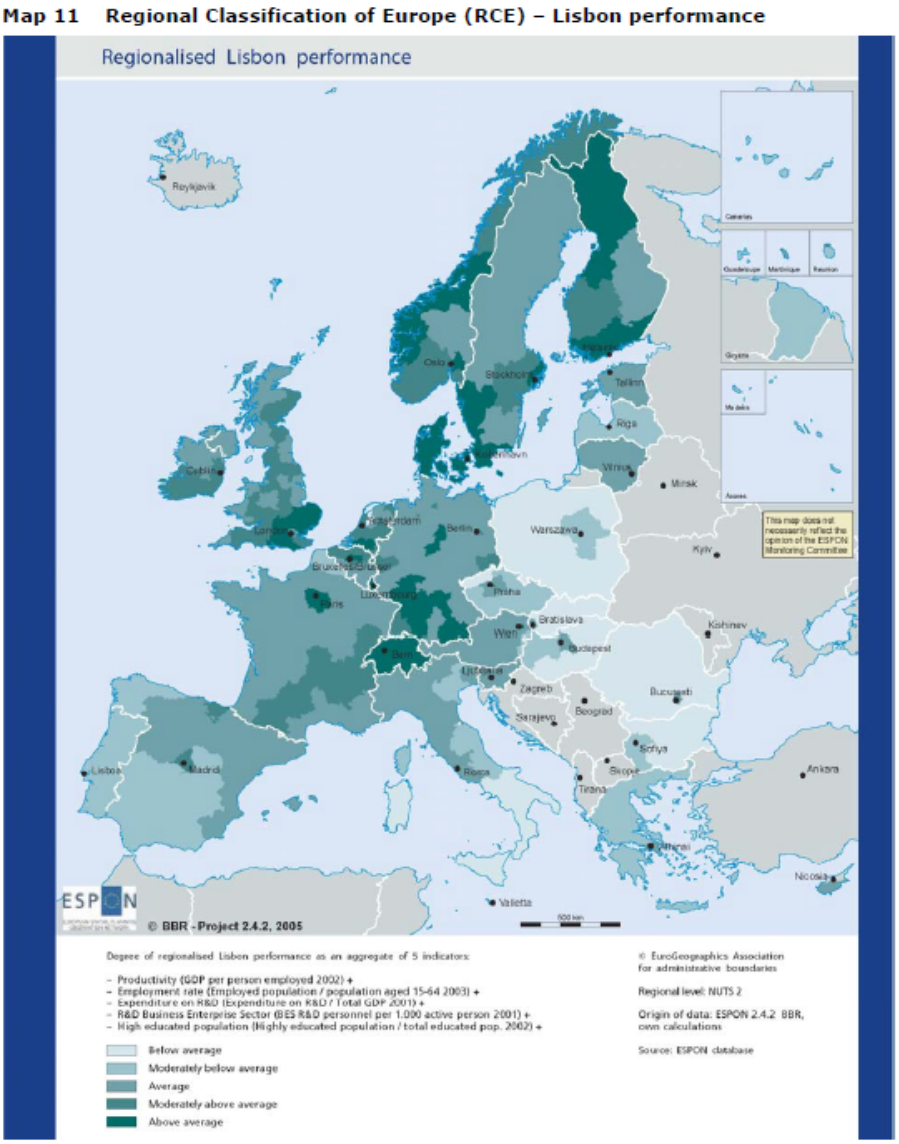
**Figure 3.2: Mapping an Example of a Simple Thematic Indicator**




(Source: ESPON 2009a: 22).

**Simple territorial indicators** take the form of typologies or classifications of regions according to specific criteria (see Figure 3.3). Tools such as territorial typologies assist in the identification of regional specifications of comparable spatial structures. An example is the typology of urban and rural regions whereby a standardised classification is produced.

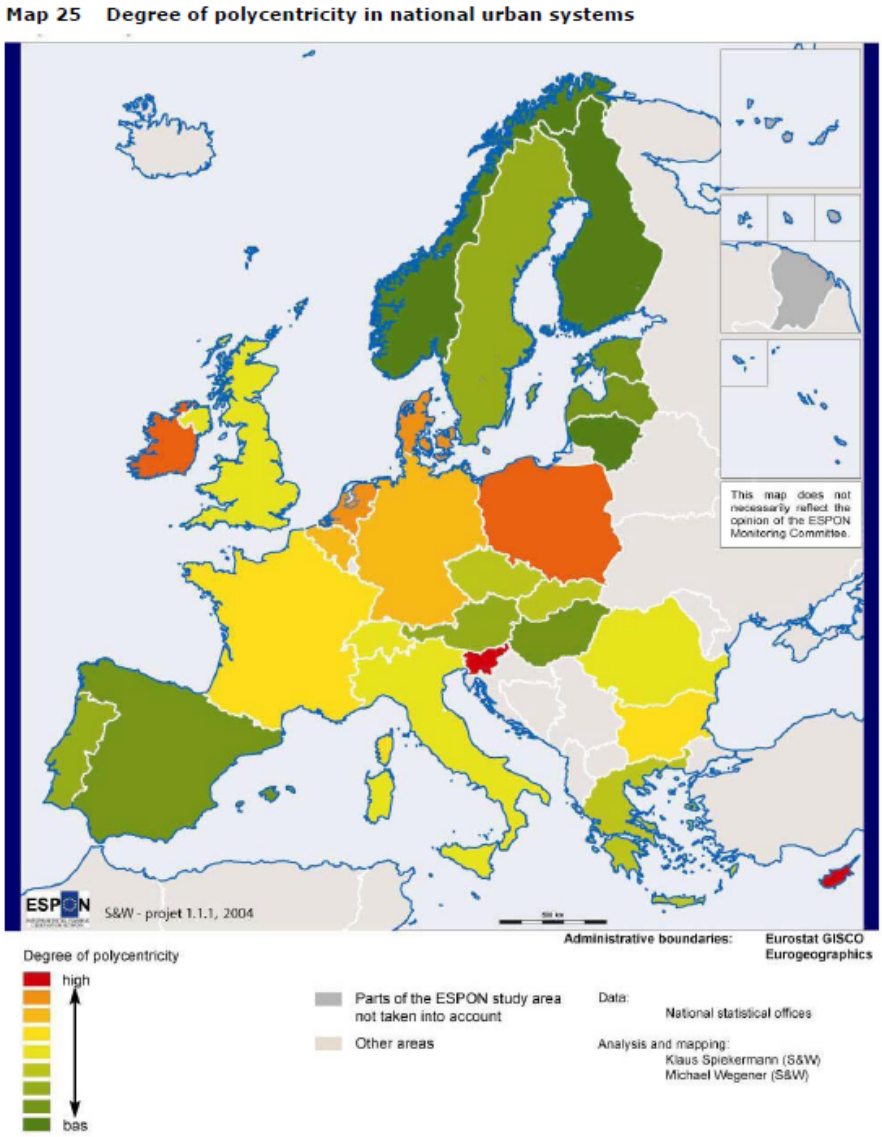
**Figure 3.3: Mapping an Example of a Simple Territorial Indicator**




(Source: ESPON 2009a: 53).

**Complex thematic indicators** generally take the form of composite indices. As indicated in Figure 3.4, they may be directly related to complex policy strategies such as the Lisbon Agenda or the current Europe 2020 strategy.

**Figure 3.4: Mapping an Example of a Complex Thematic Indicator**




(Source: ESPON 2009a: 84).

Through composite indices it is possible to measure the performance of regions in relation to the targets or objectives outlined in these policy documents. The Gateway Development Index, for example, may be seen as a complex thematic indicator which aims to assess and compare the performance of the Gateways identified in the Irish *National Spatial Strategy (NSS).*

**Complex territorial indicators** in turn aim to measure complex spatial concepts or attributes such as polycentricity, balanced regional development or territorial cohesion. They generally take the form of complex indicators but in some cases they may be mapped by overlaying the outputs of a number of distinct analyses (see Figure 3.5). Indeed complex territorial indicators are often best presented as map outputs rather than through tables of statistics.

**Figure 3.5: Mapping an Example of a Complex Territorial Indicator**

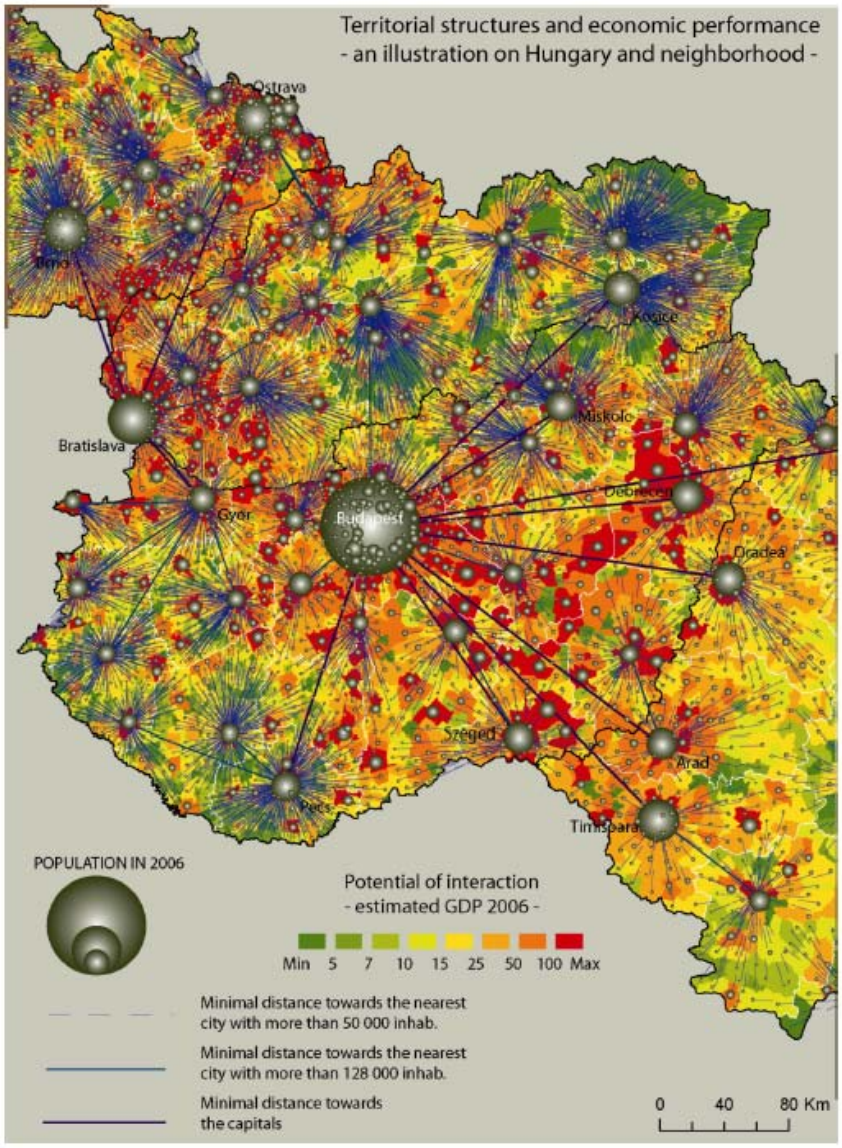



Fig. Distances and economic performance in Hungary and neighborhood

(Source: ESPON, 2011a: 24).

### *3.1.1 Methodology behind the ESPON Feasibility Study on Monitoring Territorial Development – The Filtering Process*

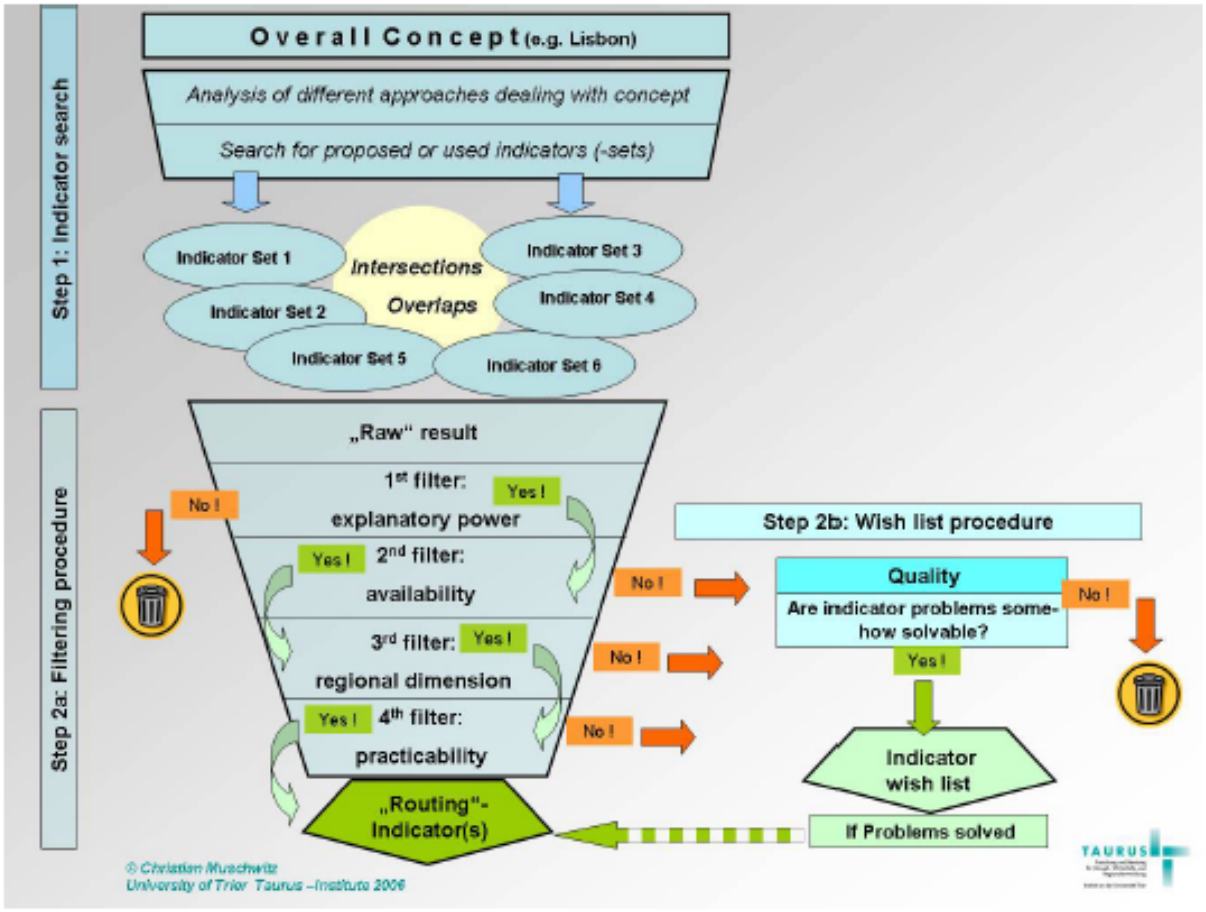
In order to arrive at a robust set of indicators, the BBR-led project team developed a multi-step procedure for identifying and filtering indicators. The final indicators selected were termed 'routing indicators' which are defined as follows:

> *"Routing indicators are distinguished from other indicators by their ability to represent much broader contexts and to show the development tendency of an entire thematic field. Their function is that of a lighthouse, guiding through endless sources of information, or an early-warning system indicating if and when some unintended development becomes apparent. Routing indicators need to be appropriate in their complexity and expressiveness"* (ESPON 2009a: 3).

Where it is found that it is not possible to implement potential indicators – due, for example, to current data limitations – they are assigned to an indicator 'wish list' (see Figure 3.6). This wish list can be useful when / if thinking strategically about future data requirements, and ensuring that the scope of a monitoring framework is not artificially constrained by current data limitations. See Appendix II for details on the key routing indicators and 'wish-list' selected under this ESPON project.

Following the identification of indicators, four filters are employed in order to test the feasibility and value of each possible indicator. These work as follows:

**Figure 3.6: Identifying and Filtering Indicators: Using a Multi-Step Process**




(Source: adapted from ESPON, 2009b: 9).

***1st filter: Explanatory power***

This first filter may be the most challenging of the four. Each indicator taken into consideration is tested for its ability to represent the thematic field it should cover in the best possible way. There should be no room for misinterpretation, it should be concise and to the point; that is, the explanatory power must be extremely high.

***2nd filter: Availability***

In a second step, an indicator needs to be available, i.e. it should be collected on a regular basis by an organisation such as EUROSTAT. Obviously, this filter presents a basic necessity. There is no use in entering an indicator to the set if the respective data is not available on a reasonable basis.

***3rd filter: Regional dimension***

Prospective indicators for monitoring spatial development should be available on a regional level to facilitate comparisons between regions in Europe. In statistical terms this translates into NUTS 2 or NUTS 3 or even beyond. Indicators that are not available at this level have to be excluded from the further filtering process.

***4th filter: Practicability***

Finally, selected indicators should reveal a link to practice instead of being purely of scientific value.

(adapted from ESPON, 2009b:10).

### 3.2 ESPON INTERCO (Indicators of Territorial Cohesion) Project

Of all the completed and ongoing projects of the second ESPON Programme (2007-2013), the ESPON INTERCO (Indicators of Territorial Cohesion)[9] project is most centrally involved in indicator development. The task of the INTERCO project is to develop a set of comparable and reliable indicators that can be used to measure territorial cohesion, complex territorial development and territorial challenges and opportunities. The project started (in mid-2010) with very large datasets of hundreds of indicators covering all aspects of territorial development and cohesion for which there is data available. Since then, the work of the project has focussed on

[9] See ESPON website for most up to date information on ESPON INTERCO project: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_ScientificPlatform/interco.html

developing a short-list of key comparable and reliable indicators and indices that can be used to measure territorial cohesion, complex territorial development, and territorial challenges and opportunities at different geographical levels and types of regions.

Led by the University of Geneva, the INTERCO project team are also keen to stress the issue of interpretation with regard to any set of indicators, and note that the explanatory value of particular indicators depends to a large extent on the context within which they are used:

> *"Furthermore, ESPON INTERCO underlines that it is not necessarily the indicator itself that is of main interest, but the way we read it. Whereas GDP or poverty indicators as such do not necessarily tell something about territorial cohesion, considering them in relation with other types of change can help to assess whether more cohesive development patterns are emerging within regions. Considering balanced development between regions, a review of the indicators e.g. with regard to differences between urban and rural regions can show whether we over time reach more cohesion between different types of territories"* (ESPON, 2011b:1).

Engagement with stakeholders through a number of facilitated workshops was a central component of the INTERCO approach. These workshops focused on developing a qualitative understanding of the various dimensions to territorial cohesion and, subsequently, testing the utility of proposed key indicators for policy-makers and practitioners. Each workshop was conducted at the European level and, through this process, five 'story-lines' or interpretations of territorial cohesion were identified.

Each story-line has different implications for the development of indicators; and the INTERCO project seeks to address each of these facets of territorial cohesion, which are viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive (see Table 3.1). These five facets of territorial cohesion also closely reflect the policy priorities of the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020* and the *Europe 2020 Strategy*.

A draft set of indicators were presented at a project workshop on 20th October 2011 in Brussels (ESPON, 2011c). They are reproduced in Appendix III of this document.

**Table 3.1: Facets of Territorial Cohesion and Associated Indicators**

1. **Smart** growth in a competitive and polycentric Europe:
   - Economic rationale/underpinning – focus on large urban agglomerations as motors of economic growth in international context.

2. **Inclusive**, balanced development and fair access to services
   - Social economy perspective – focus on fair access to services and development opportunities

3. **Local** development conditions and geographical specificities
   - Focus on territorial diversity and specific challenges and potentials of different types of territories (e.g. coastal/mountainous/sparsely populated regions)

4. **Environmental** dimension and sustainable development
   - Focus on environmental assets and quality, also green economy potential energy intensity and climate change mitigation and adaptation

5. **Governance**, coordination of policies and territorial impacts
   - Focus on improved coordination across policy areas, territorial impact assessment, decision-making, participation and territorial knowledge.

(Source: Adapted from ESPON, 2011c).

### 3.3 Ongoing and Forthcoming Projects under the ESPON Programme

The **ESPON KITCASP** (Key Indicators for Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning) project is due to commence in Spring 2012[10]. The project will seek to apply and make sense of the results of other ESPON projects (including INTERCO) for the purpose of developing indicators

[10] Led by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) based in NUI Maynooth.

and monitoring frameworks for spatial policy at the national level. The project will also assess the potential of existing datasets and spatial data infrastructures available at the national level in each context.

The KITCASP project will involve a comparative analysis across five national contexts (Scotland, Republic of Ireland, Iceland, Latvia and the Basque Country, Spain). The Irish Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is one of the official stakeholders for this project. Although Northern Ireland is not directly addressed in the project, it is anticipated that the lessons learnt during the project and the practical outputs developed will also be of significant benefit for stakeholders in Northern Ireland – and across the island of Ireland as a whole.

The **ESPON ULYSSES** (Using applied research results from ESPON as a yardstick for cross-border spatial development planning)[11] project is also of relevance for this project. It focuses on the application of ESPON results in cross-border spatial development planning – involving as it does 18 European border and cross-border areas. For example, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) – to which a number of Irish cross-border networks are members – is directly involved in this project as a key stakeholder. Ulysses is using applied research results produced under the ESPON 2006 and ESPON 2013 Programmes, as well as of more area-specific data, information and research results already available for the relevant cross-border areas. The project's emphasis is on producing analytical results – rather than on realising a cross-border harmonisation of quantitative data. The official lead stakeholder is the Alsace Region of France and the Final Report of this project is scheduled for delivery in April 2012.

[11] See ESPON website for further up to date information:
http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/ulysses.html

# Chapter IV: Regional Experience in Indicator Development for Spatial Planning – Lessons from England, Wales and Scotland

This section considers approaches to spatial plan monitoring in England, Wales and Scotland. Strategic planning policy, as well as development management processes, has been devolved to the four UK jurisdictions. Northern Ireland produced the first regional spatial strategy, the *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS) in 2001, followed by the Wales Spatial Plan, *People, Places, Futures* in 2004. As the regional paradigm took hold in the early 2000s, regional authorities in England were tasked with preparing spatial plans with reference to priorities set by the Westminster government. Yet, there is no commonality in the approach to spatial planning indicators and monitoring across the UK, apart that is from the dearth of understanding of cross-border or inter-jurisdictional policy priorities and impacts (i.e. the European territorial agenda). Despite this hiatus in regional spatial planning, significant progress was made up until 2010. As a result, there are valuable lessons to be drawn from the English experience, as well as Scotland and Wales, for the island of Ireland.

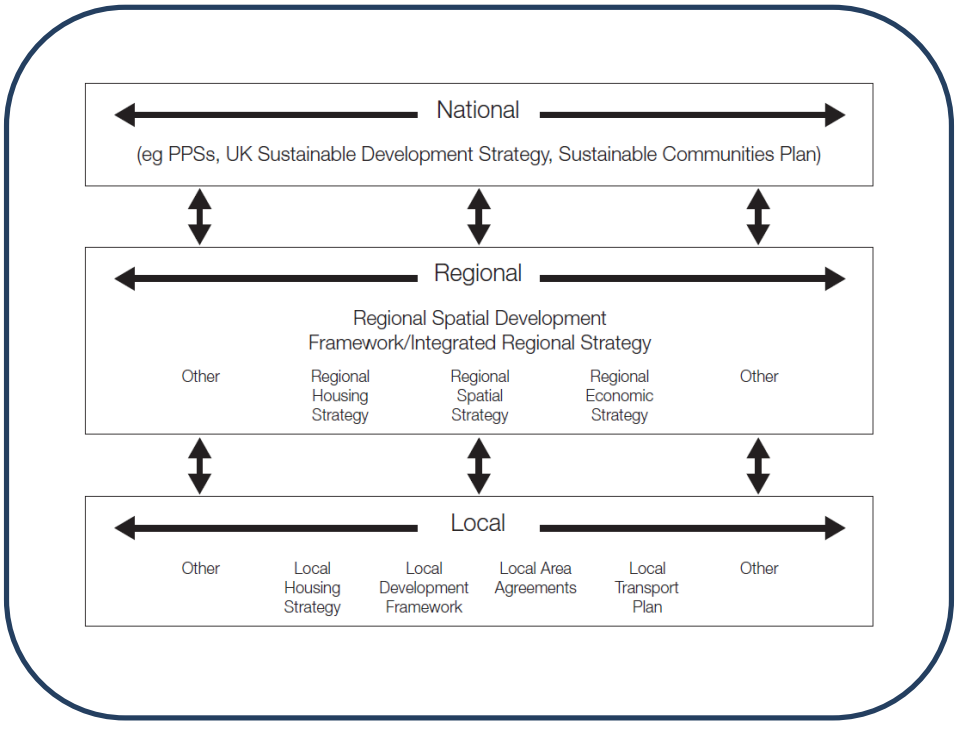
## 4.1 Spatial Planning and Indicator Development in England

The move away from a 'predict-and-provide' approach to strategic planning in England during the late 1990s propelled decision-making towards the 'monitor-and-manage' paradigm, linking national and regional targets for public policy (DETR, 1998). This was primarily focused on housing provision, and included reference to an innovative regional-tier of planning – that of Regional Planning Conferences – as a pre-cursor to regional assemblies and regional spatial strategies. It is important to note that this approach was driven by New Labour ideology that affirmed "flexibility" with stakeholder involvement and local influence over decision-making (ibid, p.5); an initiative not dissimilar to the Conservative's *Big Society* initiative commenced twelve years later. Indeed, the planning process in the late 1990s was undergoing a period of significant change (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006) and this led to a widening of both the policy agenda and policy community – a discourse which previously focused on numbers alone (Vigar *et al*., 2000: 117, 230).

Added to this dynamic was the ongoing work across EU member states around economic and social cohesion, which resulted in spatial development initiatives such as the 1999 *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) and the 2007 *Territorial Agenda of the European Union*. Certainly, these can be considered as products of the political economy present in Europe during this period. It is not surprising, then, that the use of indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of regional policy at the EU level – in place since the mid-1990s (Dühr *et al*., 2010) and used in other sectors, for example environmental policy – would be applied to spatial planning at the regional scale in England.

Formal guidance on spatial plan monitoring in England was provided in 2002 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and updated in 2005 with specific reference to the new breed of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs). This clearly demonstrated the vertical and horizontal governance links associated with plan monitoring in England (See Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Former Policy and Monitoring Context of English Spatial Planning**




(Source: ODPM, 2005: 5).

It was considered as 'good practice' by the government of the day that monitoring reports should be prepared on an annual basis, at least for 'key' indicators; with a more comprehensive review of all indicators taking place every three years (ibid. p.16). This approach was built into legislation and was designed to link RSSs to activity under the local development framework.

However, with the demise of regional planning in England, a huge gap has opened up between national and local policy; this is reflective of the rise and fall of regional planning associated with the New Labour political ideology and the subsequent (and current) Conservative-LibDem government. The English planning system is currently under review with the prospect that the detail of national planning policy, which includes Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), will be drastically reduced under the National Planning Policy Framework[12] (NPPF) in a move to enable greater flexibility at the local level. The draft NPPF does include one reference to the use of monitoring and indicators; this being in the context of taking cognisance of biodiversity issues within local planning policy (DCLG, 2011: 47). Otherwise, the proposed Framework is devoid of any significant emphasis on indicator development or spatial monitoring.

Previously, regional planning bodies (RPBs) had to supply the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in London with an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Both the system and the process of planning in England changed through the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, resulting in RSSs being produced by regional planning bodies (typically a Regional Assembly). Regional AMRs continued to be produced (see, for example, West Midlands Regional Assembly, 2010), a requirement that existed up to the change in UK government in May 2010. RSSs were designed to comprise "*elements of regulatory and spatial planning, combining certainty (over housing number allocations, for instance) and flexibility*" (Haughton *et al*., 2010: 40). Delays abounded in the development of RSSs and now, with the loss of this tier within the planning hierarchy, there is a vertical disconnect in terms of spatial plan monitoring.

[12] The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 25 July 2011 and is a key part of England's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. It places an emphasis on national objectives such as combating climate change, safeguarding the natural environment and promoting sustainable growth. Furthermore, it allows for local authorities and communities to produce their own plans, thus reflecting the distinctive needs and priorities of different parts of the country.

### ***4.1.1 Linking monitoring and indicators***

In England, like elsewhere, the *type* of monitoring that is undertaken has influenced the *format* of indicators required to complete this process. Wong and Watkins (2009) reference four types of indicator deployed in the now-defunct AMR for the Local Development Framework:

- Process targets;
- Significant effects indicators;
- Contextual indicators; and
- Output indicators (p.485-6).

Whilst these are wide-ranging, there remain gaps between this list and what the authors call a "comprehensive indicator framework" (or CIF). The gap may be caused, for example, by a lack of data particularly in a time-series, difficulties in accurately capturing data for analysis, or opposing perspectives on the nature of the policy or intervention, in this case planning. The authors, therefore, suggest that the monitoring of spatial planning policy requires the following to be measured within the CIF:

- Contextual issues;
- Input factors of capacity;
- Process issues of efficiency, participation, monitoring and competency in plan-making and implementation;
- Policy outputs;
- Immediate effects of planning policy; and
- Outcomes of longer-term changes towards achieving sustainable development.

This takes the discussion back to 'first principles' and in particular the purpose or *intended outcome* of the activity that is being monitored. The purpose of regulatory planning, for example, is to manage land resources in the "public interest". Applying this approach to spatial planning – within which land-use planning is subordinate – a key dimension is the delivery of sustainable development (Haughton *et al*., 2010: 5). Indeed, government at Westminster has affirmed this position within the 2011 draft NPPF in support of economic growth, as well as

social and environmental development. The lesson, therefore, in the context of spatial planning across the island of Ireland is to identify the agreed upon objective of taking an all-island approach.

In going further with spatial planning, though, the cross-cutting nature of the approach does present challenges in monitoring and evaluation. Particularly, the institutional environment that comes from working on an interdepartmental / multi-stakeholder basis can assist in developing comprehensive interventions arising from an integrative approach to policy monitoring, but equally can lead to tensions and divisions as different sectors apply their interpretation to monitoring information:

> *"While there is a strong desire [in England] to strengthen the involvement of different layers of government in policy monitoring, there is no straight-forward working model to achieve collaboration. It is clear that different actors have their own views on what works and what does not…"*
>
> (Wong and Watkins, 2009: 506).

Even with the vertical *connectivity* in spatial planning that existed under the Labour Government, which incorporated regional and local output indicators in one set, the system remained flawed. This is because there was a failure to a) provide information on the *coordination* of the regional, sub-regional, local and neighbourhood levels, and b) *integrate* cross-sectoral policies (Crawford, 2008).

Through their analysis of the English policy context, Wong and Watkins (2009) caution against developing a comprehensive set of indicators for nation-wide application; rather, there is a call for flexibility in the application of indicator frameworks at the sub-regional and local levels. In this context, it is also important to ensure that the local and sub-regional impacts of spatial dynamics can be clearly understood, as spatial planning outcomes:

> *"...tend to have impacts over wider market areas that are poorly represented by administrative geography…the relationship between local authority administrative boundaries and functional areas is highly variable"* (ibid. p.890).

### 4.2 Spatial Planning and Indicator Development in Wales

The Wales Spatial Plan, originally adopted in 2004, was updated in 2008. Six geographical areas within Wales were identified for data collection purposes[13] and a range of data, organised under seven key themes, is available through the Welsh Government website (see http://wales.gov.uk/topics/improvingservices/spatialplan/?lang=en). These include:

- Demographics;
- Economy and labour market;
- Education;
- Health and well-being;
- Natural and built environment;
- Housing; and
- Transport.

Each year (typically in December) a Statistical Bulletin is published which provides an update on the priority key themes, and any significant changes. This takes the form of brief descriptions that include statements of fact (or "key features"), but little by way of policy analysis. Rather, this will be undertaken by the principle users of the data, identified as:

- Welsh Assembly Government officials such as those involved in Wales Spatial Plan policy development and delivery; this includes the regional coordinators for each of the separate areas and those supporting Local Service Boards;
- Local Service Boards and their partners, including Local Authorities; and
- Other external bodies with links to the Wales Spatial Plan; for example, the Environment Agency for Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government: WAG, 2010: 2).

This demonstrates a multi-scalar approach to monitoring across government. Indeed, a strong commitment exists in Wales to the integration of national policy strategies, demonstrated by

[13] These include Central Wales, North East Wales, North West Wales, Pembrokeshire, South East Wales and Swansea Bay.

taking a holistic rather than sectoral approach, with the updated Wales Spatial Plan regarded as the "main vehicle for policy integration" within government (Haughton *et al*., 2010; WAG, 2008). On a more cautionary note, however, such an approach can also lead to the same data being interpreted differently by the principle users. This, in turn, will have implications for the extent to which policy can be truly aligned and integrated vertically and horizontally.

Much was made of the 2008 Wales Spatial Plan update and the work of a Public Services Delivery Cabinet Committee in monitoring and reporting on progress made (WAG, 2008: 2). This work programme was to be led by the Spatial Plan Unit who, together with Area Groups, have a role to play in taking an overview of progress on key issues, sharing best practice and spotting where interventions may be needed:

> *"By Autumn 2008 each of the Area Groups will produce an initial delivery framework setting out their priority outcomes, actions and the partnerships required to deliver them. Spatial Plan Wales will produce a similar delivery framework for the national priorities, as well as a monitoring framework to ensure national and regional actions are achieving the intended outcomes and remain relevant over time"* (WAG, 2008: 7).

And

> *"The delivery frameworks will be accompanied by a range of indicators so that outcomes and impacts can be monitored. These indicators will include social, economic and environmental measures, and a checklist of best practice based on common principles and recommendations from the assessments undertaken"* (WAG, 2008: 8).

However, there is scant information available on the WAG website in terms of monitoring and progress being made. Indicator sets do exist for other strategic plans, such as regional transportation plans, but it is not clear how indicators are being used to specifically *monitor* the Wales Spatial Plan. Perhaps this is an outcome of the 'fuzzy boundaries' approach to spatial planning in Wales, and that the outworking of the plan is – in concept at least – taking place at the regional and local level, particularly through the regional co-ordinators of the six different

areas that make up the Wales Spatial Plan and the Local Service Boards (WAG, 2010: 2). In other words, the feedback loop from interrogating the Spatial Plan Datasets (based on the seven themes identified above) back into the policy cycle is not clear.

### 4.3 Spatial Planning and Indicator Development in Scotland

The planning system in Scotland is different to that in England and Wales both in the organisation of strategic spatial planning, and operation / delivery of development plans at the local level. The structures now in place comprise the statutory National Planning Framework, now in its second iteration (The Scottish Government, 2009); strategic development plans for the four main city regions; and local development plans elsewhere (Haughton *et al.,* 2010). Spatial planning policy at the national level – through National Planning Frameworks (NPF) – has been informed by the ESDP, which in turn sets the strategic direction for lower level plans. In contrast to other jurisdictions, planning is regarded as a solution for, rather than a hindrance to, sustainable development; with positive relations between levels of government "in part because of regular meetings, creating a positive culture of collaboration between local and national officials on strategic planning issues" (ibid., p.113). Policy alignment leading to policy integration is, therefore, an important feature of spatial planning in Scotland, both vertically and horizontally, with openness developing out of a "largely invisible network of interactions" (ibid. p.123).

The operational scale in Scotland – considered intimate when compared to that of England yet similar to the population of the island of Ireland – has assisted in shaping the strategic spatial plan monitoring processes that exist in Scotland. There are three components to measuring NPF delivery:

- Continuous updates to the Action Programme, described as a "working document" (Scottish Government, 2011);
- Annual Progress Reports summarising the key elements of progress from the Action Programme in both national and strategic development activity in spatial perspectives; and

- A mid-cycle Monitoring Report that provides an overarching view of progress in delivering the NPF strategy and, crucially, informs preparations for the next NPF(3).

Information and reports from these three stages are publicly available; see for example http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Policy/npf

The level of detail published in the Action Programme and central government Progress Report is an indication of transparency in the process, coupled with strategic buy-in from stakeholders. This has been achieved through soft institutional infrastructures that exist in Scotland (which will differ from jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction): namely a partnership, networked approach (ESPON, 2011). Of course, this has the potential to descend into 'lowest common denominator' policy but, at the same time, Scotland is engendering "a greater emphasis on dialogue, on the co-alignment of strategies for mutual benefit" (Haughton *et al,* 2010: 130). The effects of this approach are, in turn, demonstrated through the identification of stakeholders and responsible institutions in the monitoring reports.

That the monitoring processes are transparent reflects the 'back' or 'hidden' story of the reporting progress, which in itself is difficult to measure: and demonstrates the importance of good governance arrangements in spatial planning delivery. As demonstrated by the monitoring of the NPF to date, it is important also to avoid assuming consensus simply because an output has been achieved. Rather, monitoring can, in a sense, become a barometer not only for how well government is achieving specified targets [*the end*], but also for analysing the wider institutional frameworks and relationships necessary for delivering spatial planning [*the means*].

### 4.4 Lessons from England, Scotland and Wales

Whilst this study is principally focused on monitoring spatial plan progress across the island of Ireland, specifically incorporating the NSS and RDS, evidence from England and Wales demonstrates the importance of connecting across different scales of government. This does not mean that exactly the same indicators sets must be used at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels. Rather, as argued by Wong *et al.* (2008), a flexible framework is necessary

which can be applied within the local context, and will assist in delivering from the bottom-up as well as the top-down.

Policy integration is undoubtedly of key importance: this is demonstrated by the strategic spatial planning approach adopted in Scotland and Wales. Both have lower populations in comparison with England (circs 5.5 million and 3 million respectively) and are, in reality, more similar in size to the English regions. Whilst the complexities in different tiers of government are evident in all three jurisdictions, the net result of scale is that the policy and practitioner communities in Scotland and Wales are smaller, and indeed, still maturing (Haughton *et al,* 2010). There are practical benefits from this more intimate environment, with a wider and deeper appreciation amongst stakeholders of sector perspectives and agendas, leading to more effective negotiation.

The adopted monitoring system will require strategic and holistic buy-in, reflecting "the importance of vertical and horizontal integration of policies within a spatial framework" (Wong and Watkins, 2009). This is also reflected in the Scotland case, where the institutional framework has been an enabler for delivering on NPF priorities. It will, therefore, be important that 'soft' structures exist on the island of Ireland: these will include the non-statutory (at least for the time being) collaborative framework, as well as networks and partnerships at the sub-national scale, for example the cross-border networks. Essentially, these organisations and associated processes must be communicating horizontally and vertically with central government, local government, and regional stakeholders.

As a pre-cursor to being able to share data, the Wales example highlights the importance of data availability. This has implications for the validity of certain indicators and may require proxies given that the two censuses on the island of Ireland (and other data gathering mechanisms) use different question sets[14]. Once issues such as data inter-operability (i.e. not sharing common attributes, using different categorisations), data continuity (the timing of data collection) and the scale at which data is recorded and outputted has been established and accounted for, attention can then turn to ensuring that data is made available in a format that can be shared amongst stakeholders. Furthermore, interpretation and understanding is also important. Whilst the Action Programme updates in Scotland are qualitative rather than

[14] There are also country variances throughout the UK.

quantitative, the reports are prepared using terminology that is widely understood – thus highlighting the importance of language.

Drawing on the experiences of England, Scotland and Wales, and given the acute governance challenges associated with monitoring (including interpretation, participation and communication) in cross-boundary scenarios, the following principles may prove helpful in monitoring certain policies of the NSS and RDS, and mapping the way forward across the island of Ireland in terms of indicator development:

1. Different indicators are best measured at the most relevant spatial levels of concern - for example, functional areas, and targeted/critical areas within the region – to reflect the complex meshing of different spatial and sectoral policy outcomes;
2. Outcome indicators need to be 'plan-derived' and 'objective-derived' in a plan-led system (which is still an aspiration and not yet reality in Northern Ireland);
3. A more focused set of outcome indicators should be in-built into the monitoring framework; thus forming effective analytical indicator bundles to reflect the multi-dimension of spatial planning objectives;
4. Inputs (e.g. capacity) and processes (e.g. competence) that are highly influential must be captured and related to outcome delivery;
5. Outcomes must be interpreted in light of the wider operational and political context;
6. The monitoring system must reflect spatial planning's contribution towards integrating key sectoral policies in different parts of the region/ sub-region;
7. Attitudinal assessment surveys should be used to ascertain 'invisible' and 'softer' outcomes;
8. Outputs can be used as proxy measures of outcomes, particularly when the outputs have been embedded to become outcomes over a substantial period of time and large spatial extent; and
9. The most appropriate timeframe to gauge the longer-term effect of spatial planning policies must be selected at an early stage in the process.

# Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

## 5.1 Elements of a Proposed Spatial Monitoring Framework

The proposed spatial monitoring framework outlined below is based on both international experience, and a growing knowledge-base surrounding the institutional and spatial planning policy and practice landscape of the island of Ireland. Based on this, the monitoring framework includes elements of both periodical and continuous monitoring:

### *5.1.1 Periodical Monitoring*

It is proposed that Periodical Spatial Monitoring Reports be prepared at regular intervals at the island of Ireland level (for example, once every three-five years). These should include sections on social, economic and environmental trends across space and time; using quantitative indicators, spatial analysis and maps. The resulting reports would serve to give an indication of the direction of recent, current and future developments, and to highlight potential areas which may require short, medium or longer term policy responses.

The proposed timeframe of three-five years for the preparation of such reports recognises the significant input that would be required from researchers – and policy-makers – with experience in both spatial planning, and data analysis and presentation. Potential thematic areas might include demography, housing, land-use, commuting, rural service provision and employment.

### *5.1.2 Continuous Monitoring*

In order to ensure spatial policy and planning is able to respond to developments on a more frequent basis and that decisions are not made on the basis of up-to-date information only, it is necessary for periodical monitoring reports to be complemented by a continuous monitoring system. The All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) is, for example, well-placed to fulfil this function – and indeed much of its work to date fits within this framework.

To ensure streamlined communication across the research policy interface, it may be necessary to consider the preparation of policy briefs at short intervals (e.g. quarterly) or once significant new datasets become available. This will be key to keeping policy-makers and practitioners

appraised of changing scenarios; thus facilitating speedier responses to changing circumstances. This can be undertaken by Government Departments with the provision of adequate governance and budgetary arrangements, or delivered through non-statutory / academic organisations such as ICLRD to meet the continuous monitoring needs of the policy and practice community.

In addition to monitoring spatial development patterns and trends, a critical element of any monitoring system is its capacity to assess the influence of spatial policies on other sectoral policies, and the resulting spatial impact of policy decisions. There is considerable scope for further development in this field based in particular on European experience in Territorial Impact Assessment – also known as TIA (see Appendix IV for further information on TIA and its roll-out in Holland). It is, however, perhaps too early at this stage, to make specific recommendations without conducting further research.

## 5.2 Operationalising the Spatial Monitoring Framework

The process of operationalising a spatial monitoring framework that crosses administrative boundaries requires greater consistency; this is particularly so where the framework is implemented on a cross-jurisdictional basis. In the context of the island of Ireland, this can only be achieved through the adoption of both **top-down** (such as identifying strategic trends and issues) and **bottom-up** (place-based) approaches.

Operationalising a spatial monitoring framework will involve a thorough analysis at the all-island level to identify strategic trends and issues with standardised definitions and common methodologies, and promote the production of place-based policies generated by local / regional government according to the specificities of each jurisdiction.

### *5.2.1 Governance Arrangements*

In terms of good governance arrangements and practices, this report argues that key stakeholders must:

- Clearly identify **pathways and actors** involved with monitoring, and nurture the roles and responsibilities of each – for example, in response to the challenge of rolling-out the non-statutory collaborative framework on a cross-jurisdictional basis (i.e. taking an all-island dimension and addressing the interface issues at regional / local level);
- Establish and seek representation on an all-island spatial data reference group;
- Recognise the evidence gathering activities on-going in the Irish border region, and ensure that the cross-border networks are encouraged to promote **commonality, consistency and complementarity** in the choice of indicators;
- Ensure that any Spatial Monitoring Framework is supported by continuing developments towards **data harmonisation** on an all-island basis, involving actors and agencies such as the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the National Statistics Board and the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO);
- Build on the existing relationship between the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) in the Republic of Ireland and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and Department of Environment (DoE) in Northern Ireland on the development of linkages between the NSS and RDS;
- Drawing on representation from central government and regional levels of governance, including cross-border networks, establish a working group that is charged with the coordination and oversight of the spatial monitoring framework process.

### ***5.2.2 Thematic Content***

Recognising the breath of activity that is taking place in indicator development from the EU level to local government around a broad range of themes that are directly or indirectly related to spatial planning and development, this report recommends:

- Ensuring continued complementarity with EU-level policies, taking due cognisance of the INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community) Directive;
- Establishing themes that are relevant to, and supportive, of the draft non-statutory collaborative framework; for example, settlement patterns, housing, connectivity, transport, retail, economy, climate change and environmental management; and
- Moving from data capture to data analysis and interpretation.

### ***5.2.3 Technical Issues***

Given the all-island context of the spatial monitoring framework being discussed, it is essential that work continues on a collaborative basis around the 'known' technical issues of data-interoperability, frequency of collation, etc. – as well as new issues as they arise and systems become more complex. To this end, the report recommends:

- Ensure complementarity between on-going data capture / analysis programmes across the island of Ireland; this includes, for example, the MOLAND Project through Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland, DevPlan GIS through the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the ICBAN Regional Data Capture Project and the North West SPACEial Project;
- At the sub-regional level, promote collaborative working on the gathering of datasets and their subsequent monitoring in terms of impact on future spatial development patterns and trends; for example, working with Regional Authorities in the Republic of Ireland to facilitate a joint approach to the monitoring of indicators identified as key priority indicators under the Regional Planning Guidelines; and
- Emulate, in association with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government the DevPlan GIS project in Northern Ireland – with the procedures and systems being put in place now (pre-2015) in advance of the devolution of planning powers to local councils under RPA.

## 5.3 Concluding Comments

The capacity to accurately and objectively monitor social, economic and environmental development trends and patterns across space and time is a central feature of any spatial planning system. The planning and development legacy of the last ten years serves to highlight the real need to be able to make evidence-informed decisions in response to an increasingly uncertain context of rapidly evolving spatial development challenges and opportunities.

Although the specific policy instruments available may be different, the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland face both similar and common challenges. The non-statutory collaborative framework, *Spatial Strategies on the Island of Ireland: Framework for Collaboration,* makes it

increasingly possible to work together on an island of Ireland basis to produce a spatial monitoring framework which responds to the strategic policy parameters set out within the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) and *Regional Development Strategy* (RDS). Indeed, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) has led the way in providing comparable spatial datasets on an island of Ireland and cross-border basis (see www.airo.ie for further details). The challenges are thus no longer primarily technical, but more a question of how to make the best use of the available information in a strategic policy and planning context. As highlighted in this report, it is a question of how we interpret, communicate, understand, and perhaps even evaluate, data.

Experience elsewhere in the UK, as reported in Chapter IV, highlights the importance of institutional structures in supporting the development of spatial monitoring frameworks. Strategic 'buy-in' from stakeholders at national, regional and local levels is critical to ensuring the success of a monitoring framework. In the context of the island of Ireland, soft' structures such as the draft non-statutory collaborative framework and the three cross-border networks are likely to play a key role in facilitating cross-border working in this area. The extent of institutional integration and coherence will depend, however, on the level and quality of communication between all stakeholders and their commitment to a harmonised model of data capture and analysis.

Experience at the European level under the ESPON programme, as discussed in Chapter III, provides a reminder of the importance of data availability and comparability. ESPON projects have been ambitious in developing comprehensive lists of spatial indicators which help to identify where there may be data gaps which can potentially be addressed in the future. The lesson that the level of ambition should not be limited by current data constraints is an important one; with the ESPON experience also demonstrating the importance of combining high resolution mapping with interpretative text. Maps produced early on in the ESPON Programme were often at too high a resolution to be of significant practical use to policy-makers and practitioners at national and sub-national levels. While recent improvements in data availability have improved this situation to some extent, the need for dedicated spatial monitoring initiatives at national level – and below – is evident.

At the same time, statistical indicators or maps on their own are not sufficient to inform strategic policy and planning. Periodical spatial monitoring reports, following the German tradition (as discussed in Section 3.1), serve to combine selected indicators, high resolution mapping and interpretative text, which evaluates the importance of recent trends and patterns in context and offers potential explanations. Across the island of Ireland, recent years have witnessed considerable progress in the range and resolution of spatial data available to policy-makers and planners. The recommendations set out in this report aim towards making the best use of this evidence base in order to further support and coordinate strategic spatial planning and policy at island of Ireland, national, regional and local scales.

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# Appendix I: The International Centre for Local and Regional Development

A registered charity based in Armagh, Northern Ireland, the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) is a North-South-US partnership established in 2006 to explore and expand the contribution that planning and the development of physical, social and economic infrastructures can make to improve the lives of people on the island of Ireland and elsewhere. The partner institutions began working together in 2004 and currently include: the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) at the National University of Ireland Maynooth; the School of the Built Environment at the University of Ulster; the Institute for International Urban Development in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh.

Each of these partners brings together complementary expertise and networks on both a North-South and East-West basis – creating a unique, all-island and international centre. The ICLRD continues to expand its collaboration with other institutions and has built up close working relationships with individual faculty and researchers from Harvard University, Queens University Belfast and Mary Immaculate College Limerick. It is also developing its international linkages, particularly with those organisations that have an interest in cross-border cooperation and collaboration; for example, Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontaliére (MOT) in France and Groundwork Northern Ireland.

**What does the ICLRD do?**

- Provides independent joined-up research and policy advice on cross-border and all-island spatial planning and local and regional development issues (economic development, transport, housing, the environment, service provision, etc.);
- Offers professional education and capacity building programmes for communities and local, regional and national government representatives and officials;
- Assists local governments / communities in translating policy into 'on the ground' action;
- Acts as a catalyst to bring relevant public and private actors, North and South, together to work on common goals; and

- Promotes international cooperation and exchanges.

The ICLRD uses a variety of strategies to undertake this work, including engaging in action research with local governments, communities and central agencies; undertaking and publishing case study research to evaluate and develop good practice models; hosting conferences and workshops on key themes; and developing and delivering training modules for key stakeholders in the physical, social and economic development of the island of Ireland.

**Why is this work important?**

The ICLRD's work is important in relation to four key processes on the island of Ireland:

- Cross-jurisdictional commitment to spatial planning and infrastructure projects;
- Peace and reconciliation, and the regeneration of local communities in the Border area;
- Economic competitiveness and growth on the global stage; and
- Multi-level governance and compliance with planning, economic and environmental directives from the European Union.

**CroSPlaN**

In cooperation with the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the ICLRD has for the past three years been involved in an exciting new programme to develop a cross-border planning network. This initiative has been made possible through funding from the EU's INTERREG IVA Programme; administered through the Special EU Programmes Body. Having commenced in 2009, the network (CroSPlaN) has undertaken the following activities:

- Two action research projects per year which enhance emerging cross-border activities and expertise in the vital area of spatial planning;
- One executive training programme per year for at least 20 central and local government officials, councillors and community leaders to assist them in both delivering and supporting these activities;
- An annual conference and technical workshop; the dual function of which has been to facilitate networking and address identified areas of need.

# Appendix II: Key Indicators for Spatial Monitoring produced under the ESPON Feasibility Study on Monitoring Territorial Development (2009)

## 1. Key Routing Indicators

| Key to table |
|---|
| Simple Thematic Indicators |
| Complex thematic indicators |
| Complex territorial indicators |

| Indicator | Calculation | Explanatory value |
|---|---|---|
| Male Activity Rate 15-64 years | Numbers of males between 15 and 64 years on the labour market/all males between 15 and 64 years | Indicates the share of the potentially active population who are able to support the non-active population. |
| Female Activity Rate 15-64 years | Numbers of females between 15 and 64 years on the labour market/all males between 15 and 64 years | Indicates the share of the potentially active population who are able to support the non-active population. |
| Unemployment rate < 25 years | Share of unemployed persons of the labour force below 25 years | the employment and thus integration of young people is essential for the functioning of social inclusion of a society |
| Employed in high-tech sector | Persons employed in the medium-high and high-tech sector of manufacturing as a share of total employment in % | Indicates spatial balance of the development of the knowledge economy |
| Unemployment rate | Unemployment rate represents unemployed persons as a percentage of the economically active population | Measure of social exclusion and economic performance |
| Development of the unemployment rate | Variation of unemployment rates over time | Provides a dynamic picture of the demand for labour within |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | the economy over time and can provide an early warning of extent of risk of social exclusion |
| Migratory balance | (Population at the end of the period - population at the beginning of the period) - (births - deaths)/total population at the beginning of the period | Shows attractive and repulsive regions at European scale and indicates areas with depopulation risk |
| Share of population younger than 15 years | (Population younger than 15/total population)*100 | Indicates population of school age and associated cost and also potential future trends in age structure of the labour market |
| Population aged 15-64 years | (Population in the age of 15 to 64 years/total population)*100 | Indication of age structure of the population – population in active age group |
| Population older than 64 years | (Population older than 64 years/total population)*100 | Indicator of older population dependent on the state or society |
| Primacy Rate | The share of the region's total population that is found in the largest city in the region | Indicator of poly-centricity or mono-centricity |
| Potential multimodal accessibility to population | Activities (here: population) weighted by a function of travel time. For each origin, the destination activities are summed up based on the assumption that the attraction of a destination increases with the size and declines with increasing travel times. For this indicator travel time is represented as the minimum | This composite index combines indicators of travel time and level of regional development. It thus provides an indication of where regions are located in relation to centres of economic activity. It was a key indicator of the Lisbon Strategy, taken as a measure of global economic competitiveness |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | travel time of the modes road, rail and air. The indicator values are then standardised to the average of the ESPON area (ESPON area = 100). | |
| Fragmentation index | Calculated as a proportion of fragmented areas in homogeneous areas | Indicates fragmentation of the natural landscape and can be used to depict environmentally sensitive areas which are of concern regarding biodiversity loss |
| Settlements endangered by flood and artificial areas | Total number of flood events from 1987 to 2002 multiplied by the share of the artificial surface | Based on analysis of land-use data and flood event records this indicator identifies urban settlement areas at risk of flooding. |
| R&D expenditure as a percentage of regional GDP | Gross expenditure for research activities in percent of gross domestic product | Measure of innovation and research share of economic activity |
| GDP in PPS per inhabitant | Gross domestic product in Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) /number of regional inhabitants | Measure of purchasing power and comparative living standards |
| Change of GDP in PPS per inhabitant | Change in GDP in PPS per capita over time | Change in economic performance and comparative living standards |
| Labour costs | Raw data: compensation of employees in million euros at current market prices | Indication of cost of labour – of limited applicability as an absolute value |
| Connectivity to railway stations | Travel time by car to nearest railway station | Indication of mobility and public transportation accessibility |

## 2. Indicators Wish List

| Indicator | Calculation | Explanatory value |
|---|---|---|
| Investment rate | Gross fixed capital formation/Gross domestic product in millions of euro | Indicates intensity of economic activity and potential to postpone today's consumption to a later date |
| Utilised agricultural area | % of total area dedicated to agriculture | Importance of agricultural landscapes – not an indicator of importance of agricultural sector |
| Trust in the legal system | Share of persons having complete trust/no trust at all in the legal system of a country | Indication of governance structures and level of democratic accountability |
| Politics too complicated to understand | Share of persons finding politics too complicated to understand | Indicates transparency of political and governance systems |
| Work in an organisation or association (other than party) | Share of persons working in an organisation or association (other than a political party) within the last 12 months | Indication of level of participation in civil society |
| Land consumption by transport infrastructure | Proportion of regional area consumed by transport infrastructure (road and railways, ports, airports) in percent of total regional area | Indication of land-take for transport infrastructure – areas with high land consumption may be at increased risk of flooding |

# Appendix III: Draft List of Indicators produced under the ESPON INTERCO Project (2011)

Note:

 = Indicator reflects objectives of the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020

Indicators on green background = headline indicators – can be used to measure well-being

## 1. Smart Growth in a Competitive and Polycentric Europe: Indicators

| Indicator | Level | Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| GDP per capita | NUTS-3 | Overall economic output of all economic activities |
| Population aged 25-64 with tertiary education | NUTS-2 | Highly-qualified labour force potential as basis for future R&D activities |
| Employment rate 20-64 | NUTS-2 | Participation of active population in economic activities and in producing net value added |
| Polycentricity index | NUTS-0, NUTS-1 | Degree of policentricity |
| Accesibility to grocery stores / schools | NUTS-0, d.o.u., raster | Fair access to basic public services |
| Expenditures on R&D | NUTS-2 | Measuring the future orientation of the economy by maintaining competitiveness through innovations |
| Population potential within 50 km | Raster, NUTS-3 | Proxy for demand for provision of services and as potential for any kind of activities. |
| Labour productivity in industry and services | NUTS-2 | Measure for the competitiveness of a region in global markets |
| Accessibility to passenger flights | NUTS-3 | Connectivity of a region to global business networks |

| Indicator | Desired direction of change |
|---|---|
| GDP per capita | Increase desired, lagging regions catch up faster |
| Population aged 25-64 with tertiary education | Increase desired, lagging regions catch up faster |
| Polycentricity index | Should increase according to TA2020 |
| Employment rate 20-64 | Increase desired, lagging regions catch up faster |
| Accessibility to grocery stores / schools | The higher the better, but minimum level needs to be maintained |
| Expenditures on R&D | Generally increase desired, at least stable rate |
| Population potential within 50 km | Securing a mimum population potentail to maintain services even in peripheral areas |
| Labour productivity in industry and services | Increase desired, lagging regions catch up faster |
| Accessibility to passenger flights | Securing a minimum level of global accessibility |

## 2. Inclusive, Balanced Development and Fair Access to Services: Indicators

| Indicator | Level | Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment rate (total, by sex) | NUTS-3, NUTS-2 | Quality of regional labour markets, assessing female participation |
| Life expectancy at birth | NUTS-2 | Proxy for overall health / quality of health-care system |
| Disposable household income | NUTS-2 | Welfare state of a region |
| Personal state of health | NUTS-0, d.o.u. | Degree of well-being with respect to health |
| People at risk of poverty and social exclusion | NUTS-0, d.o.u. | Welfare measure of a region |
| Population living in workless households | NUTS-0, d.o.u. | Welfare measure of a region |
| Net migration rate | NUTS-3 | Proxy for attractiveness of a region |
| Population potential within 50 km | Raster, NUTS-3, NUTS-2 | Proxy for demand for provision of services and as potential for any kind of activities. |
| Old-age dependency ratio | NUTS-3 | Measuring balance in age-structure of society (avoiding overaging) |
| Population density | NUTS-3 | Population potential, settlement density |
| Early school leavers | NUTS-1 | Measure for education level / quality |

| Indicator | Desired direction of change |
|---|---|
| Unemployment rate (total, and by sex) | Decrease desired towards zero |
| Life expectancy at birth | Exectancy should at least remain stable, no decrease |
| Disposable household income | Increase desired, lagging region catch up faster |
| Personal state of health | Increase desired until everybody´s perception is very good |
| People at risk of poverty and social exclusion | Reduction of risk to zero desired |
| Population living in workless households | Reduction desired |
| Net migration rate | Should be positive, at least stable |
| Population potential within 50 km | Securing a minimum population potentail to maintain services even in peripheral areas |
| Old-age dependency ratio | Avoid overaging, maintaning a balanced population structure |
| Population density | Moderate increases, sparsely populated areas catch up faster |
| Early school leavers | Decrease desired towards zero |

## 3. Local Development Conditions and Geographic Specificities: Indicators

| Indicator | Level | Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| GDP per capita | NUTS-3 | Overall economic output of all activities |
| Population aged 25-65 with tertiary education | NUTS-2 | Highly-qualified labour force potential for future R&D activities |
| Accessibility to grocery stores / schools | NUTS-0, d.o.u. | Fair access to public services |
| Number of new firms | NUTS-0 | Measure for economic vitality, whether political and economic conditions favour new start-ups and entrepreneurship |
| Population potential within 50 km | Raster, NUTS-3, NUTS-2 | Proxy for demand for provision of services and as potential for any kind of activities. |
| Old-age dependency ratio | NUTS-3 | Measuring balance in age-structure of society (avoiding overaging) |
| Population density | NUTS-3 | Population potential, settlement density |
| Net migration rate | NUTS-3 | Positive net migration as proxy for attractiveness of a region |

| Indicator | Desired direction of change | |
|---|---|---|
| GDP per capita | ↑ | Increase desired, lagging regions catching up faster |
| Population aged 25-65 with tertiary education | ↑ | Increase desired, lagging regions catching up faster |
| Accessibility to grovery stores / schools | ↑ → | The higher the better access; but minimum level needs to be maintained |
| Number of new firms | → | The higher the better, ratio should be stable over time |
| Population potential with 50 km | ↑ → | Securing a minimum population potentail to maintain services even in peripheral areas |
| Old-age dependency ratio | → | Avoid overaging, maintaning a balanced population structure |
| Population density | ↑ | Moderate increases, sparsely populated areas catch up faster |
| Net migration rate | ↑ → | Should be positive, at least stable |

## 4. Environmental Dimension and Sustainable Development: Indicators

| Indicator | Level | Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| Mortality / economic risk from multiple hazards | Seamless GIS | Risk assessment and vulnerability for environmental hazards |
| Air pollution (PM10 / ozone) | NUTS-0 | Reducing emissions in response to global climate change |
| Natural and environmental assets / challenges | Raster | Preserving the natural environment |
| Soil sealing per capita | NUTS-3 | De-coupling of economic/demographic development and land take |
| Water resources, access to clean water | NUTS-2 | Access to an essential resource |
| Renewable energy resources or production | NUTS-0 | Clean energy, potential for local development |
| Energy intensity | NUTS-0 | Striving for more efficient, environmental-friendly economic activities (de-coupling of energy consumption and output) |
| Greenhouse gas emissions in CO2 equivalents | NUTS-0 | Response to global climate change |
| Urban waste water treatment capacity | NUTS-2 | Capacities for cleaning used waters |

| Indicator | Desired direction of change | |
|---|---|---|
| Mortality / economic risk from multiple hazards | ↘ | Decrease risks/vulnerability desired |
| Air pollution (PM10 / ozone) | ↘ | Pollutions to decrease towards zero |
| Natural and environmental assets / challenges | ↗ | The higher the assets, the better for the environment |
| Soil sealing per capita | ↘ | Decrease desired to minimum level (de-coupling) |
| Water resources, access To clearn water | ↗ | Increase desired |
| Renewable energy resources or production | ↗ | Increase desired |
| Energy intensity | ↘ | Decrease desired to minimum level (de-coupling) |
| Greenhouse gas emissions in CO2 equivalents | ↘ | Emissions decrease until zero |
| Urban waste water treatment capacity | ↗ → | Capacities should correspond to demand, increases where necessary |

## 5. Governance, Coordination of Policies and Territorial Impacts

| Indicator | Level | Reasoning |
|---|---|---|
| Regional governance indicator (QuG) | NUTS-2 | Overall performance of governments and public participation |
| Trust in legal system | NUTS-0, d.o.u. | Performance of governments, trust in present systems |
| Cooperation agreements (number, budgets) | NUTS-2 | Measures the level of cooperation |
| Public debt | NUTS-0 | Suatainability of financial sector, reducing vulnerability to economic crises, reducing risks for future generations |

| Indicator | Desired direction of change | |
|---|---|---|
| Regional governance indicator (QuG) | ↗ | Indicator to increase, the higher the better |
| Trust in legal system | ↗ | Increase desired |
| Cooperation agreements (number, budgets) | ↗ | Cooperations to increase to foster regional development |
| Public debt | ↘ | Decrease desired to minimum level |

# Appendix IV: Seminar Report - Indicator Development and Monitoring for the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines

## Dublin, 28th September, 2011

### Background and Context

The *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) for the Republic of Ireland, published in 2002, articulated a strong vision and long-term strategy for balanced regional development; while the 2010 Review and Update of the NSS and statutory review of the *Regional Planning Guidelines* (RPGs) reaffirm this policy commitment. In the light of increased uncertainty and volatility in relation to spatial development and socio-economic trends in recent years and a recognised need for a fundamental reappraisal of the role of the planning system, the capacity to monitor spatial trends and evaluate the progress of the NSS in achieving its objectives is increasingly critical.

This seminar aimed to contribute to an informed discussion on the development of indicators and territorial monitoring frameworks in the context of the NSS and the RPGs. Spatial monitoring is critical to understand current and evolving dynamics of population, housing, land-use, infrastructure and services and environmental quality. It can also play a key role in demonstrating the 'added value' of spatial planning at national and regional scales. Furthermore, Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) methodologies provide an increasingly important means for ensuring adequate attention is given to the spatial dimension in decision-making across the range of policy sectors. The seminar drew on both international expertise (through the ESPON programme) and good practice, and highlights current and ongoing experience in indicator development and monitoring in Ireland.

The seminar was organised as part of the ESPON in Integrated Territorial Development Strategies or **ESPON – INTERSTRAT Project**. The INTERSTRAT project is led by the UK ESPON Contact Point (i.e. the Royal Town Planning Institute) and includes partners from nine countries in total. The Republic of Ireland is represented by the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) – based in the National University of Ireland Maynooth – as ESPON Contact Point for Ireland.

***The ESPON-INTERSTRAT Project***

The overall aim of the INTERSTRAT project is to promote and facilitate the use of ESPON findings in the creation and monitoring of integrated territorial development strategies. It also aims to support transnational learning about the actual and potential contribution of ESPON to integrated policy-making. Integrated territorial development is the process of shaping economic, social and environmental change through spatially sensitive policies and programmes.

The strategic objectives of INTERSTRAT are:

- To develop the capacity of the ESPON Contact Points to engage with stakeholders in strategic spatial planning;
- To develop an understanding of what planning and development policy-makers want from ESPON;
- To use interactive approaches to engage policy-makers and practitioners with ESPON data, analysis and results;
- To develop improved dialogue and communication methodologies to transfer ESPON know-how (i.e. territorial themes; use of applied research results; policy recommendations; etc.); and
- To share transfer of good practice with other national Contact Points in Europe.

More information is available at the project website: http://www.espon-interstrat.eu/

**The Seminar**

This full-day event aimed to contribute to an informed discussion of the development of indicators to territorial monitoring in the context of the NSS and the RPGs. At the core of the discussion was how to achieve balanced regional development in the context of shrinking resources and growing uncertainty in terms of spatial and economic development. In this milieu, making evidence-informed spatial planning decisions is all the more important. The seminar was split into three sessions, each comprising of two speakers (one from the international ESPON community, and one from the Irish planning community) and a facilitated discussion. The first session paired presentations on the NSS and on the application of

indicators at the European level. The second session focussed on the regional level, drawing from experience in the UK and the ongoing development of indicators in Ireland for monitoring the implementation of the RPGs. The final session coupled a presentation on the experience of the Gateway Development Index project in Ireland with a discussion on the Dutch approach to Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA).

In his opening comments, Dr. Cormac Walsh pointed out that now, more than ever, evidence-informed spatial planning (of which indicators form an integral part) must be championed and practiced. He suggested that a lack of evidence and indicators, or perhaps more crucially the lack of their application, led Ireland into the current housing crisis; in that spatial planning failed to shape territorial development trends at a strategic level. Now, in a developmental context of restricted growth, it is imperative not to repeat the mistakes of the past and to be able to articulate the 'added value' of spatial planning.

## Session One

**Ms. Gabrielle McKeown (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)** focussed on the evolution of the NSS over the last decade. As the main territorial development strategy for the Republic of Ireland, the NSS has been highly instrumental in shaping spatial planning objectives on a range of levels – this is despite the recent housing crisis drawing attention to shortcomings in terms of its implementation. Ms. McKeown explained that the NSS was intended to fulfil a number of roles, but its strength lay in two directions: a) it influences other strategies and development plans at regional and local level, and b) it has a policy integration role within the Government, and thus provides the key means to forward a territorial agenda at this level.

**Dr. Kai Böhme (Spatial Foresight)** considered how looking at territorial practices at different levels of abstraction can visualise different realities; noting that while we lose the detail of the higher resolution of the local level when we look at regions at a more abstract scale, this picture can also offer us insights into our own area. Indicators (on broader spatial scales), he suggested, can distort the picture of the local area but, nevertheless, it is also important to look at these pictures to see how the local area fits into the bigger (imperfect) picture. The key, then, is to be able to read these different pictures together in a way that is pragmatic and useful. This

will be most useful where there is comparable data, ideally within comparable units of collection. With this in mind, practitioners can use ESPON data to understand their area and how it fits into the bigger picture of Europe. To use spatial data you must be able to a) understand your own layer, b) be able to understand your position in relation to others, c) understand the territorial dimensions, and d) know how to keep up to date online. He suggested that this evidence should always be used as a way of getting closer to an integrated European territorial policy.

*Discussion*

**Prof Brendan Gleeson (NIRSA, NUI Maynooth)** highlighted how the opening presentations had raised important questions about how to maintain a spatial approach to planning the economy in the face of national recession. A discussion was raised about the lack of a spatial or territorial dimension in key economic development plans, and innovation programmes, that can have a strong bearing on regions. It was suggested that this was not necessarily a failure of the NSS, but a failure of sectoral policies to take into account the territorial dimension. Without a similar territorial approach emphasised in such strategies, the question was asked, how effective can the NSS and the RPGs be in fulfilling their objectives?

A further question was asked on whether we need to rethink the NSS – particularly in light of, some of its failings? In responding, **Ms. McKeown** broadly agreed with this sentiment, but highlighted that at this stage the NSS is the Strategy we have to work with and, as such, we should seek to improve on what we have rather than aim to fundamentally restructure the spatial planning context. She highlighted the need to consider such statements in terms of the NSS' original aim of more balanced regional development, that is letting other areas achieve their potential outside of Dublin. While it might be time to refashion what we are trying to do with the NSS, there is still more than ever a need to prioritise cities. **Mr. Pádraig Maguire (Border Regional Authority)** shared these sentiments, arguing that, while the NSS has been more successful in some areas than others, the Strategy has broadly served its purpose. He reminded the group that we now have a much broader evidence-base to draw upon and that we need to use this information for future planning; suggesting that an important way of ensuring efficiency in anticipation of the next round of structural funds is to streamline the NSS with the investment priorities of the EU Territorial Agenda. Both **Dr. Böhme** and **Prof. Gleeson** highlighted Ireland's current high birth rate as something to capitalise on in the future in relation

to our European neighbours. While the need for indicators was quite clearly expressed, there were fewer consensuses about the specific types of indicators that Ireland might need or how these should be rolled out.

## Session Two

In her presentation on the experience of developing indicators for monitoring spatial planning in the UK (or more specifically, English) context, **Prof Cecelia Wong (University of Manchester)** suggested that monitoring is a very valuable tool but there are still problems. There is a political drive to prove that spatial planning makes economic sense. However, the reliance on such a perspective is fraught with difficulties, not least because spatial planning is an extremely complex process and one that is often concerned with mitigating negative externalities – rather than creating 'positive' things. There is a need to avoid allowing territorial strategies to become the lowest common denominator. To be reflective is not sufficient; we need to better understand the opportunities to make monitoring work, and to take cognisance of how issues stray across administrative boundaries. In order to achieve these ends, indicators cannot be implemented in a top-down fashion because areas are about context and therefore different indicators will need to be interpreted in different ways in different places. Practitioners need to become better at differentiating between types of indicators and using them in practical and applied ways. Thus, a bottom-up approach to indicators needs to be developed to compliment the top-down approach already in existence. Using indicators in this way can better equip planners to understand change in space and time in their areas. As such, it is important to work with indicators that are easy to understand; with Prof. Wong recommending that a set of about twenty indicators, which are used to measure dynamic outcomes rather than outputs, is a better approach than developing a large set of indicators that are compiled but not used widely.

**Mr. Colm McCoy (Dublin and Mid-East Regional Authorities)** took the audience through the rationale underpinning the RPGs; suggesting that the focus on indicators was timely given the stronger 'policing role' now held by the Regional Authorities. He emphasised how the legislation and European Directives have caught up with spatial planning, and now demand that policies are evidence-informed and tested for impact. And as indicators are an important source of evidence for spatial planning, this calls for a closer alignment of the exchange of information. This is especially pertinent given that collecting information is costly and, as such, there is much

room for efficiencies to be generated. The Regional Authorities are currently working on developing a set of indicators for monitoring the RPGs. This process has thrown up a series of questions relating to what we want indicators to do, what themes we want explored and how we want to present the outputs. Ideally, this should be done through some sort of centralised system. He finished off his presentation by highlighting the work of the All Island Research Observatory (AIRO), a publically available data visualising tool based in NIRSA, as a key means of putting indicators to work (see www.airo.ie).

*Discussion*

**Ms. Sheila Convery (UCD)** asked **Prof. Wong** about how best to move towards dynamic indicators, and whether or not this would involve acquiring better datasets? It was noted that in the UK, rich data is available. But in the absence of this, a coordinated approach amongst agencies, whereby one institute would be commissioned to compile the data (with every agency chipping in together on a regular basis to keep this up to date), which would then be shared among all is recommended.

A question was put to the panel about how best, given the subtle shift to looking at the inherent potential of regions, to measure and compare the differential potential of regions in this paradigm. **Dr. Böhme** observed that this is one of the biggest challenges currently faced by ESPON; with **Prof. Wong** in turn suggesting that her approach to indicators differed from ESPON. From her perspective, the key people who need to use monitoring tools are policy people. They don't need league tables necessarily; rather there is a need for indicators to allow people working in region to extract from them the key lessons and key stories of THEIR region. As such, indicators should stimulate the brain to think about strategy.

**Dr. David Evers** added that indicators are generally developed by the scientific community, but that putting indicators into action – i.e. to make evidence-informed policy decisions – always requires a 'leap of faith'. Rankings and benchmarks can demonstrate how our regions compare to others or how similar policies have created particular effects in the past, but ultimately they can't tell policy-makers what will happen. Instead, they can only provide them with the most current information possible to make an evidence-informed decision. Moreover, policy will always be based on political considerations**. Mr. McCoy** suggested that it is important to take

stock of where we are with the RPGs, highlighting that the development of a distinct set of indicators that everyone can buy into has to be a key priority going forward.

## Session Three

In his presentation, **Mr. Adrian O'Donoghue (Border Midland West Regional Assembly)** offered an overview of the results of the Gateway Development Index (GDI). The GDI was developed in order to measure the progress of the nine Gateways cities mapped out in the NSS. It is intended that this index will feed into the wide process of monitoring the implementation of the NSS as a whole. His talk followed on from the previous session in terms of looking at some practical experience in developing indicators in the Irish context that are analytically bundled for monitoring the Gateways against the NSS objectives. The index is focused on eight domains (covering areas such as population, enterprise, transport, and health) with three indicators for each domain. This was complemented by a perceptive survey, which aimed to gauge people's awareness of the Gateway's status, and how such status has, in their opinion, contributed to the development of the area. In the study, Cork, Dublin, and Galway emerged as the leading Gateways.

**Dr David Evers (Dutch Environmental Assessment Agency, Dutch ESPON Contact Point)** rounded out the final session of the day by outlining his experience working on various territorial impact assessment projects in Holland. He suggested that although there was no specific 'Dutch approach', there were a number of initiatives emerging. He spoke firstly about the 'Unseen Europe', noting how a new Dutch spatial strategy had failed to mention Europe once. Dr. Evers and his colleagues responded by publishing a report demonstrating the various ways in which Europe already did play a role in Dutch spatial policy; highlighting how Europe works in terms of sticks (e.g. Directives), carrots (e.g. structural funds), and persuasion (e.g. rankings that 'name and shame' under-performing regions). The 'Unseen Europe' project produced a series of maps based on these delineations showing the impact of EU policies on Holland and the impacts, he suggests, are pervasive; leading to the conclusion that any national spatial strategy that does not take EU into account is doomed to failure. A sensible approach is to develop an 'early warning system' that flags upcoming EU policy shifts and the likely exposure of different nations and regions in order to better prepare for and streamline national policy objectives. The ESPON ARTS project has attempted to develop a general Territorial Impact

Assessment (TIA) methodology; with the project looking at the territorial impact of various EU policies. The process starts by taking a particular EU policy/Directive and seeing whether or not a region is exposed to/vulnerable to it. From this a list of potential impacts are drawn out, which are then turned into a series of cause/effect indicators. To date, while this process has had some positive impacts, there are still many problems with the model. And while TIA is evolving, what is important is that this process not be merely technocratic but elicit a dialogue between scientists and policy-makers.

*Discussion*

**Prof. Brendan Gleeson** opened this final discussion by suggesting that one of the key points coming out of these presentations was the importance of regional sensitivity, the acknowledgement that regions do not operate and perform in the same ways. In response to the earlier discussion on the differences in approach between supporting regional competitiveness and regional strength in diversity, a commentator from the floor highlighted a study which suggested that small countries tended to be mono-centric whereas big countries tended to be poly-centric. He also cautioned that if Ireland were to move to that model strongly supporting mono-centricity that this could have very dangerous territorial impacts. **Mr. Cussen (DoECLG)** suggested that it would be very beneficial for the EU to undertake TIAs for their Directives, and also suggested the idea of different groups in Ireland combining their resources and knowledge to create a TIA for the country.

**Dr. Walsh** asked **Mr. O'Donoghue** to offer his opinion on the challenges to raising the level of awareness about the territorial dimension in the broader policy sphere. Mr. O'Donoghue responded that it is always difficult to get beyond the barrier to seeing the territorial dimension. He highlighted how the Gateway Development Fund was one of the first programmes cut in the recession. He suggested that planners don't have a champion to go to / meet with in Central Government on regional development issues. **Dr. Williams (UCD)** suggested that these debates are always contingent upon criteria. For example, if we take the economic dimension as the only criteria, then Dublin will always win out; but if we have a broader pallet that includes social issues, then we will come up with a different rationale for planning for regions. Another commentator suggested that a new phrase coming out of Europe is "smart specialisation". What would this mean for Ireland? **Dr. Evers** suggested similar processes are happening in the

Netherlands at the moment, whereby top sectors of the economy have been identified and if there is already some clustering effect evident then policy is aiming to help further embed these in particular regions.

### Final Summation

In summing up his thoughts on the day's event, **Mr. Jim Hetherington** (International Centre for Local and Regional Development) noted that:

- The act of spatial information collection and analysis needs to be better coordinated;
- There is a major job of work to change present understanding of "value for money";
- Monitoring needs to use indicators and tools that are intuitive and easy to use;
- Planners need to know how people live their daily lives in order to plan for areas;
- Planners need to be able to explain this to policy-makers, whether officials or elected members;
- There needs to be a greater recognition that the political dimension plays a vital role in the process. There needs to be leadership in this regard; and there needs to be a better dialogue between politicians and planners; and
- Scale is very important: we ignore the bottom-up dimension at our peril. Monitoring must involve the whole spectrum of actors.

## Follow-on Actions from the Seminar

The work on developing indicators for the *Regional Planning Guidelines* (RPGs) will continue to be taken forward by the Regional Planning Guidelines Implementation Officers Working Group on Spatial Indicators being led by Colm McCoy of the Dublin Regional Authority. In addition, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) will continue to assist in this process, as much as is possible.

A new ESPON project (ESPON KITCASP) – as referenced in Chapter III – will specifically focus on the development of indicators and monitoring frameworks for the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS). The study will commence in early 2012 and run for 18 months in total. The Department

of the Environment, Community and Local Government are stakeholders in this project which also includes partners from Scotland, Iceland, Latvia and the Basque Country.

Published by International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD)
39 Abbey Street
Armagh BT61 7EB
Northern Ireland

2011

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development is part-financed by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the EU INTERREG IVA Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body




ISBN No: 978-1-906879-08-2